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MSc Social Development Practice
Student Report

Regeneration Aspirations for Euston: Local Perspectives on the High Speed Two Rail Link

Alexandre Apsan Frediani, Stephanie Butcher,
Laura Hirst, Editors.
In partnership with Citizens UK.

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April, 2014

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Content

About the editors	4	5. Connected Places	31
Foreword	5	5.1 Introduction	31
1. Introduction	6	5.2 Methodology	31
1.1. A brief timeline of the HS2 process	7	5.3 Residents perspectives	31
1.2. Structure of the report	7	5.4 Alternative proposals	33
1.3. Scope of engagement	8	5.5 Conclusion	33
2. Dignified Housing	9	References	34
2.1. Introduction	9	6. Conclusion	35
2.2. Methodology	9	List of figures	
2.3. The politics of housing in the UK	9	Figure 2.1. Enabling and disabling factors affecting residents' capabilities to achieve their housing aspirations.	
2.4. London regeneration trends and displacement	10	Figure 3.1. Respondent typology	
2.5. Policy analysis	10	Figure 3.2. Respondent gender split	
2.6. Resident perspectives	11	Figure 3.3. Respondent ethnicity	
2.7. Concepts of dignified housing	12	Figure 3.4. Respondent age	
2.8. Housing aspirations	13	Figure 4.1. Map of Somers Town	
2.9. Conclusion and recommendations	14	Figure 4.2. Impacts of construction on areas in and around Somers Town	
References	15	Figure 6.1. Cross-cutting findings	
3. Secure Livelihoods	16	List of tables	
3.1. Introduction	16	Table 2.1. Housing Policy analysis	
3.2. Methodology	17	Table 4.1. Impacts of construction on areas in and around Somers Town.	
3.3. Resident perspectives: livelihoods aspirations	18	List of images	
3.4. Impacts of regeneration	19	Image 1.1. & 1.2. Student transect walk through Regents Park Estate, Euston	
3.5. Conclusion	20	Image 2.1. Focus group with Bengali women, Regents Park Estate	
References	22	Image 2.2. Regents Park Estate	
4. Safe Communities	23	Image 3.1. Ravi Shankar restaurant, Drummond Street.	
4.1 Introduction	23	Image 3.2. Raavi Kebab, Drummond Street.	
4.2 HS2 and Somers Town	23	Image 4.1. & 4.2. Local perceptions of safety	
4.3 Methodology	25	Image 5.1. Hampstead Road Open Space, Regents Park Estate	
4.4 Resident perspectives	25	Image 5.2. Entry gates at St Mary's flats	
4.5 HS2 and its effects on safety	27		
4.6 Policy approaches to safety	27		
4.7 Conclusion	29		
References	30		

About the editors

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Foreword

Rhys Moore, Director of the Living Wage Foundation and Community Organiser for Camden, Citizens UK

Camden Citizens was launched in 2011 at a large assembly of 700 people in Friends House, on the Euston Road. We are a part of Citizens UK, an alliance of civic organisations in London, Birmingham, Cardiff, Milton Keynes and Nottingham. We bring together churches, mosques and synagogues; schools, colleges and universities; unions, think-tanks and housing associations; GP surgeries, charities and migrant groups to work together for the common good. We call this community organising.

We develop the capacity of our members to build power locally so they can hold politicians and other decision makers to account. We work on a range of issues, from small local campaigns to large national campaigns such as the Living Wage.

Community organising is based on the principle that when people work together they have the power to change their neighbourhoods, cities, and ultimately the country for the better. We work with people who want to transform the world, from what it is to what they believe it should be.

To do this we listen to our members, asking them about their concerns and developing strategies to improve our communities. We ensure that civil society is at the negotiating table alongside the market and state, so that our communities are included in the decisions that affect them.

So back in 2011 - after an extensive six month listening exercise - the members of Camden Citizens voted to work together on a common agenda for social justice: on jobs, housing, safety, social care and the Living Wage.

Since then we have made great progress on a number of fronts - Camden Council are now an accredited Living Wage Employer, as is Great Ormond Street Hospi-

tal. On safety, young people from Maria Fidelis School worked hard to launch the first 'Safe Haven' at Euston Station. This means that shopkeepers are trained to offer refuge to young people worried about their safety. The Social Care campaign has taken off nationally and members from Hampstead Parish Church have met with and won the support of the Minister for Care for our Social Care Charter.

Our members also recognised the significance of High Speed Rail 2, the largest infrastructure project in Europe, and the impact it would have in Euston and the surrounding area if it were to go ahead. The project has the potential to cut across a number of our priority issues in particular jobs, housing and safety.

We were delighted therefore when the DPU took the decision to join Camden Citizens last year. The staff team and students have been a brilliant addition to the membership. They have brought greatly valued expertise, enthusiasm and experience to our work. This excellent report represents the beginning of Camden Citizens engagement with HS2, and will inform a wider exercise in listening and learning.

At a meeting on 20th March held at Maria Fidelis School the membership voted overwhelmingly to work together to ensure that HS2 - if it goes ahead - delivers the best possible deal for local communities. The members of Camden Citizens are developing a Citizens Charter on HS2 based on our previous experience of working on a similarly disruptive and 'one-off' development - the 2012 Olympics.

Thanks to all the students and academic staff who worked so hard to produce this report.

1. Introduction

This report is a result of a three-month research project carried out by Masters students of the Social Development Practice (SDP) programme based at the Bartlett Development Planning Unit at University College London. The central focus of the programme is the relationship between active citizenship and development, with the recognition that diverse identities and aspirations are critical components of social change. The course responds to the growing attention being paid to well-being and 'citizen-centred' approaches to development by a range of stakeholders, from development agencies to grass-roots organisations and offers opportunities to engage with the theoretical and practical implications of promoting well-being and citizenship in a context of social diversity.

This exercise was undertaken from October 2013 to January 2014 as part of the practice module of the SDP programme. Based on an action-learning approach, which seeks to embed student learning in an on-going process of activism, the exercise generates learning and practical outputs, using the micro-level as an entry point to unpack the implications of wider urban processes in relation to key issues of diversity, rights and freedoms. In doing so, the aim is to contribute to a process of engagement, to produce an analysis of secondary and primary data that can support community activism.

The central focus of this report is the regeneration aspirations of local residents, workers and business owners in the Somers Town and Regents Park wards of Camden, within the context of the proposed construction of the £50 billion high-speed two (HS2) rail link. The purpose of this research therefore, is to contribute to the on-going debates related to the HS2 proposal, looking to qualify the claimed or intended benefits of this large-scale regeneration scheme for local residents. In particular, it looks to unpack the different impacts and beneficiaries HS2 is intended to serve, as well as exploring the impacts felt by various groups in the directly-affected Camden area. A key aim of this analysis is also to reconceptualise the objective of urban development away from economic growth, towards a process of enhancing residents' well-being.

HS2 proposes the construction of a train line that would impact upon a large area around Euston station in the Borough of Camden – the terminus for the project. Local residents and business owners are expected to experience a series of social, environmental, and economic im-

pacts both during the lengthy construction phase and beyond. Key concerns include the demolition of at least four tower blocks in Camden Council's Regent's Park Estate, with tunnelling creating a blight on many more homes above ground; the use of Drummond Street - a landmark community home to many family-run curry restaurants and sweet and spice shops - as a transport corridor during construction; the loss of several open and green spaces surrounding the station; and mobility delays and disruptions in the local area. There are also expected to be impacts in relation to worsening air quality, loss of biodiversity, the excavation of a burial site with over 30,000 human remains, and noise and accessibility concerns during the construction period. The Borough of Camden has indicated its opposition to the plan, maintaining that there is not a sufficient business case to warrant the significant public expenditure, and the lack of sufficient investigation of the impacts of the scheme or consideration of comprehensive mitigation measures for local residents.

In contrast, the Consultation Document, High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future outlines a number of intended benefits, including: an increase in rail capacity; transformation of the country's economic geography; the support of employment, growth and regeneration; and the creation of a platform for the delivery of long-term and sustainable economic growth and prosperity. In Phase 1, the HS2 will reduce travel time from London to Birmingham to 49 minutes, with claims that increased mobility will reduce the north-south divide in the country.

A number of local community action groups in Camden have formed in response to these plans, encompassing a range of approaches, from opposition to the plans, to attempts to evaluate and mitigate the impacts of HS2 on the local area. In light of this, SDP students have worked in collaboration with Camden Citizens, part of an alliance of London-based civil society community organising groups, to document residents' existing needs and aspirations, with the aim that these can be used as leverage in future negotiations over the future of their area.

The students' research focuses on four key dimensions of well-being, defined in collaboration with Camden Citizens; dignified housing, secure livelihoods, safe communities and connected places. Students worked in four groups, each focusing on a different dimension, and were asked to contrast the costs and benefits of regeneration as espoused by national and policy-level rhetoric in rela-

tion to the experienced reality and aspirations of diverse groups of people in the Borough of Camden. The following report explores and documents residents' priorities connected to regeneration and if and how the HS2 planning process supports or hinders these aspirations.

The four groups analyzed key policy documents and conducted semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, transect walks and other participatory exercises with residents and key stakeholders. Whilst the report does not claim to present a comprehensive or quantitatively representative assessment of the issues facing the area it does outline a number of important contradictions and issues for local people that need to be taken into account in the next stages of the HS2 planning process.

1.1 A brief timeline of the HS2 process

Dialogue opened on the case for high speed rail in Britain in 2009, when the Labour government established HS2 Ltd to research the suitability of a line between London and the West Midlands. Following a review of the proposed plans and supporting studies, Britain's new coalition government published a proposed route in December 2010, with a public consultation on the proposal running from February to July 2011.

This consultation garnered over 55,000 responses, the majority citing serious reservations with the proposal. However, in January 2012 the Secretary of State for Transport announced that plans would proceed with HS2 Ltd's recommended route between London and Birmingham (Phase One). Broader recommendations for a wider network, linking Birmingham to Manchester, Leeds and points further north via the existing East and West Coast main lines (Phase Two), as well as a to Heathrow Airport, were also accepted. In May 2012 a draft Environmental Statement and Design Refinement was published, allowing a two month response period that closed in July 2012.

HS2 Ltd is currently producing legislation for submission to Parliament, comprising an Environmental Statement on the Phase One route and a hybrid bill. Should the HS2 project secure parliamentary approval, construction is due to start in 2017, with the first high-speed trains scheduled to start running between London and Birmingham in 2026, and extensions to Manchester and Leeds in 2032.

Meanwhile, a number of grassroots campaign and activist groups and networks, such as Stop HS2¹, HS2 Action Alliance² and the Pan-Camden HS2 Alliance³ have coalesced around opposition to the plans, and are working nationally and locally to lobby policy makers to drop their plans, and to fight for fair compensation.

1.2 Structure of the report

Building on the well-being framework of previous SDP student research engagements in London and Kenya, this report explores the regeneration aspirations of residents and businesses in the most directly impacted wards of Somers Town and Regent's Park.

The following entry points reveal some of the immediate impacts of the proposed HS2 plans, and are expanded upon in subsequent chapters:

Dignified Housing: An excess of 477 homes are to be directly impacted by the construction of the HS2, disproportionately affecting the Borough of Camden. This includes the demolition of at least four council housing blocks (comprising 188 households) in the Regent's Park Estate and over 30 freestanding homes. So far no plans have been announced to re-house residents, but the Borough of Camden is exploring measures for the re-provision of homes lost as a part of the HS2 proposals. Included in these options is the purchase of the National Temperance Hospital as an option for replacement council and social housing. An additional 300 households are predicted to be affected by blight as a result of construction disruptions related to noise, vibrations, or transport disturbances. The borough of Camden is already facing a shortage of affordable housing, with 25,000 people on the waiting list for council housing.

Secure Livelihoods: A number of local and family-run businesses have voiced opposition to HS2 construction, citing concerns that construction will disrupt trade. Most severely affected will be those curry and spice houses located on the historically significant Drummond Street, which will be used as a transport corridor for over 300 lorries during the construction phase. Mobility from Euston commuters will be additionally impeded by the erection of a major barricade between the station and Drummond Street. Others affected proprietors include those of the Bree Louise pub on Euston Street, and the Exmouth Arms on Starcross street.

Safe Communities: The HS2 scheme has posed a number of challenges to the ability to build safe and flourishing communities. Alongside the disruption of a living adjacent to a prolonged construction site, planned works in the Euston area are expected to result in the loss of several open spaces including sports and play facilities, Adelaide Road Nature Reserve, Camden Square Gardens, Hampstead Road Open Space, and St. James Gardens. Parts of the area have already experienced community safety issues— including concerns for rough sleepers and street drinking— and residents have identified deprivation, unemployment, education, and poor health as other significant concerns.

Connected Places: While the HS2 project seeks to enhance mobility between cities in the north of England and London, there has been less discussion on potential spatial fragmentation within the city. Though Euston station is extremely well-connected by National Rail, the Underground, and bus routes, it is not well designed in terms of the wider public realm and movement, creating a poor local environment for cyclists and pedestrians. Continuing changes as a result of the HS2 proposal and other regeneration schemes in the area are expected to further impact on the ability of local residents to move through their neighbourhoods, and to connect to valued places in the city.

1.3 Scope of engagement

The issues raised by this report will feed into the development of a 'HS2 Citizens Charter' spearheaded by Camden Citizens, which aims to enhance the negotiating power of community groups and push for the best possible conditions for local residents and communities in future regeneration plans for the borough. Apart from supporting the on-going work of community groups in the area, it is hoped that this engagement progresses over time to help address the current absence of longitudinal studies on the impacts of regeneration processes on local residents, particularly from a well-being perspective.

Image 1.1. and 1.2. Student transect walk through Regents Park Estate, Euston



NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. www.stophs2.org
2. www.hs2actionalliance.org
3. <http://pancamdenhs2alliance.org/>

2. Dignified Housing

Whose aspirations count, whose vision matters, whose voice is heard?
Housing needs and aspirations among Euston residents affected by HS2.

Shasha Ge
Junghwa Kim
Rabita Musarrat
Ahmad Rifai
Marcela Torres
Kristel Tracey

2.1 Introduction

The London Borough of Camden faces a significant housing dilemma. With the prospect of 80% of the total proposed housing demolitions along the entire HS2 line taking place in Camden and the guillotine predominantly landing on social housing units, in a borough already experiencing a severe shortage of affordable housing, the stakes for HS2-affected residents are high.

The aim of this chapter was to understand the present conditions, housing needs and housing aspirations of local residents in the Euston area, and to capture the potential impacts of HS2 regeneration plans on residents' ability to achieve their own perception of dignified housing.

Our research findings are compared to the aspirations and vision of HS2, along with those of national, regional and local government in regards to housing. The handling of the regeneration process in the area will be a clear indicator of ultimately, whose aspirations count, whose vision matters and whose voice is heard.

2.2 Methodology

The following findings are derived from qualitative research methods that aimed to capture the housing values and aspirations of the residents in the Euston Area. In addition to secondary data and policy analysis we used mixed interview techniques to allow flexibility in collecting information from different people and for different research aims.

Through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, transect walks and field observations we were able to uncover important elements of what residents value about their homes and housing, in particular some of the more intangible qualities and relationships not currently considered in the HS2 regeneration plans.

Using a framework based on Amartya Sen's capability approach, we analysed the housing aspirations of community members (also known as functionings: 'the various things a person may value being or doing', or what a person is able to do or be with material goods such as housing [(Sen, 1999:75)]. The freedom to achieve and enjoy the aspirations associated with dignified housing (i.e. the capability space [Frediani, 2010:176, Alkire & De-neulin, 2009:30]) is defined by the opportunities, choices and abilities afforded by current regeneration plans and the political setting. Therefore, before analyzing the aspirations of residents, it is important to take a closer look at the current housing and regeneration context in the UK and London.

2.3 The politics of housing in the UK

It is impossible to look at housing trends in Camden in isolation from broader housing trends in the UK. The provision of housing is a profoundly political issue, and is inevitably affected by the dominant political and economic context of the day. In the midst of current sweeping changes to the benefits system and in a climate of 'austerity', the trend of moving the provision of housing away from the obligation of the state to the markets continues with gusto. There is a nationwide shortage of social housing (the production of which has been in decline since the mid-1980s) and council tenants are encouraged to practice their 'Right to Buy' whilst others are encouraged to make use of 'Help to Buy', a recent scheme whereby the Government guarantees up to 95% of a mortgage. These trends are underpinned by a culture of 'aspiration'; as stated by David Cameron, "owning a home is about more than four walls to sleep in at night. It's about independence, self-reliance, moving on and moving up. Help to Buy is helping people realise the dream of homeownership - it's a key part of my plan for Britain" (Help to Buy press release, 2013).

So where might the housing aspirations of a group of predominantly social tenants in Euston sit within a broader context of private ownership prioritisation in a neoliberal system?

2.4 London regeneration trends and displacement

'While urban regeneration in London seems to be successful in facilitating economic and cultural regeneration, it is faring much less well in terms of social inclusion and social sustainability and may well be implicated in contributing to the widening of social and economic inequalities' (Imrie et al., 2009: 9)

The proposed HS2 regeneration plans for Euston are part of a regeneration process taking place across the capital. The physical landscape of previously undesirable areas is being transformed into locations sought after by those higher on the socio-economic ladder. However, the rise in house prices that regeneration creates has been shown to have an exclusionary effect; Watt (2013:101) highlights the necessity of '...understanding the diverse nature of displacement, that is, how lower-income residents are pressured out of their homes and neighbourhoods'. The potential impacts of the HS2 plans on the housing situation in Camden show how processes of regeneration can lead to such displacement through the demolition of homes and a lack of options for rehousing in the local area.

Image 2.1. Focus group with Bengali women, Regents Park Estate



Under current plans, a minimum of 216 Camden homes will be demolished, with a further 264 Camden homes also at risk of demolition; this includes the demolition of at least four council housing blocks (comprising 188 households) in the Regents Park Estate and over 30 freestanding homes. An additional 300 households are predicted to be affected by blight as a result of construction disruptions related to noise, vibrations, or transport. According to an HS2 impact study conducted by Camden Council, average house prices in the borough stand at £837,550, above the level of compensation offered for existing home owners. In addition, more than 25,000 people are already waiting for council help with accommodation; the potential increase in demand as a result of HS2 regeneration will only add to an already over-burdened local authority's commitments to social housing tenants (Camden Council, 2013: 8). While Camden Council is committed to rehousing displaced residents in close proximity, the already-existing spatial strains upon the neighbourhood generate significant challenges for this aim.

2.5 Policy analysis

An analysis of the different discourses and visions surrounding the future provision of housing, at the national, city and borough scale highlights a disconnect between government and local authority policy and the potential impacts of the HS2 plans:

Image 2.2. Regents Park Estate



Table 2.1. Housing Policy analysis

	UK Government	Greater London Authority	Camden Council
Affordability	<i>'The New Buy Guarantee Scheme (will) deliver a significant increase in access to affordable mortgages for those who can afford mortgage repayments but do not have large savings'</i> (UK Government, 2012)	<i>'The Mayor will, and boroughs and other relevant agencies and partners should, seek to maximise affordable housing provision'</i> (London Plan, 2011: 90)	<i>'The consultation on objectives and priorities... found that housing, particularly affordable housing was the most frequently prioritised for accommodation in the EAP area.'</i> (Draft Euston Area Plan, 2013:24)
Quality and choice	<i>The government is improving the quality and quantity of properties for rent, both in the private and social sector'</i> (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013)	<i>'The Mayor is clear that London desperately needs more homes in order to promote opportunity and real choice for all Londoners, with a range of tenures that meets their diverse and changing needs and at prices they can afford.'</i> (London Plan, 2011:71)	<i>'The Council wants homes of all tenures to be safe, in good repair, free from risks to occupants' health– including excess cold – and with as low a carbon footprint as possible.'</i> (Camden Council, 2011:8)
	<i>'A thriving, active but stable housing market that offers choice and flexibility is critical to our economic and social wellbeing.'</i> (HM Government, 2011: 7)	<i>'Regeneration proposals should take account of stakeholder aspirations for the neighbourhoods concerned, and for the wider area affected.'</i> (London Plan, 2011: 57) <i>'Working with relevant partners, the Mayor will seek to ensure the housing need is met... and provide better quality accommodation for Londoners.'</i> (London Plan, 2011: 74)	<i>'Tenants were open to ideas around housing re-provision, provided there was choice in housing quality, cost and security of tenure.'</i> Camden Housing Needs Survey, 2013: 31)
Supply	<i>'The government wants builders, investors and local councils to increase the supply of both new-builds and repurposed empty homes.'</i> (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2014)		<i>'There is significant need for new housing in Camden... Housing is therefore Camden's priority land use.'</i> (Draft Euston Area Plan, 2013: 24)
Community		Safety <i>'Our neighbourhoods must be places where people feel safe and are proud to belong.'</i> (London Plan, 2011: 6)	Social diversity <i>'Camden is a place that people from all walks of life call home. We think that's what makes it such a good place to live and work.'</i> (Camden Council, 2012: 2)

2.6 Resident perspectives

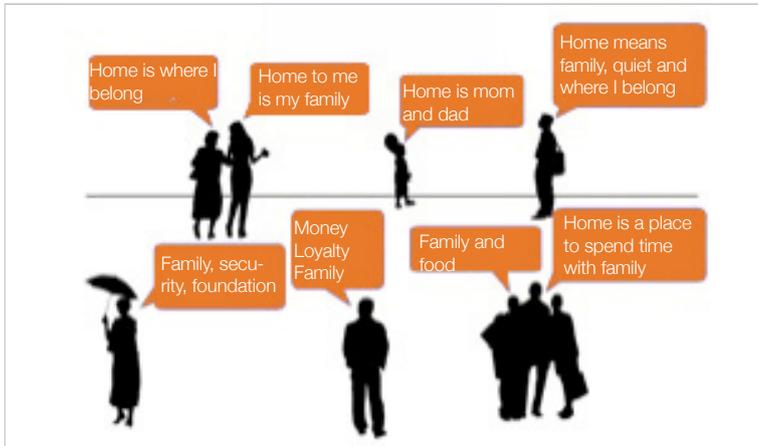
The concept of housing has different meanings for different people both in terms of their experience of the immediate space and beyond. A house is not just a property but a space that people interact with. According to Turner (1972), housing is an essential part of being human that cannot be quantified. It is a place that is deeply associated with people's activity rather than its physical value. Furthermore, the concept of home also relates to

the social, cultural and historical backgrounds of families. Beyond policy level rhetoric, it is therefore important to explore the meanings underpinning the concept of dignified housing for people living in South Camden, and their associated aspirations.

Throughout our interviews, focus group discussions and other participatory research exercises, we were able to identify key elements of what is valued when discussing the meaning of home.

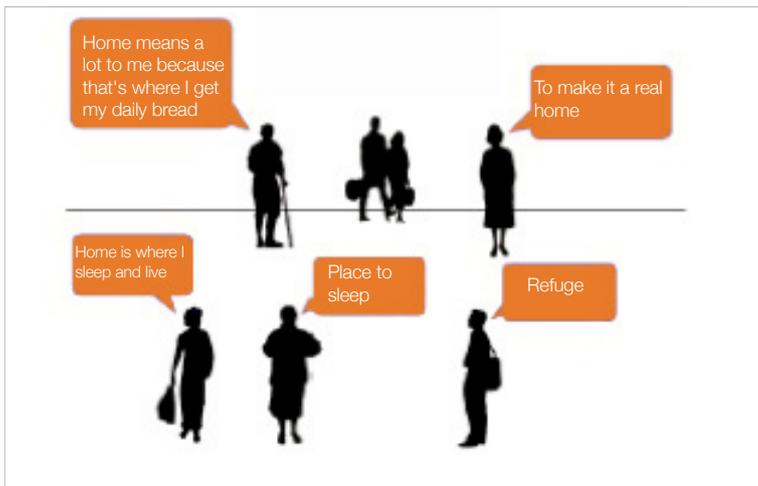
2.7 Concepts of dignified housing

Family



People in the Euston area perceive home as synonymous with family. It also represents the place where people recall memories and create meaningful memories. This was evidenced in statements such as: “home is where I belong” and “home means family, quiet and where I belong”, that indicate that home implies meaningful interaction and also a sense of belonging. Children especially referred to their parents as their own meaning of home.

Shelter



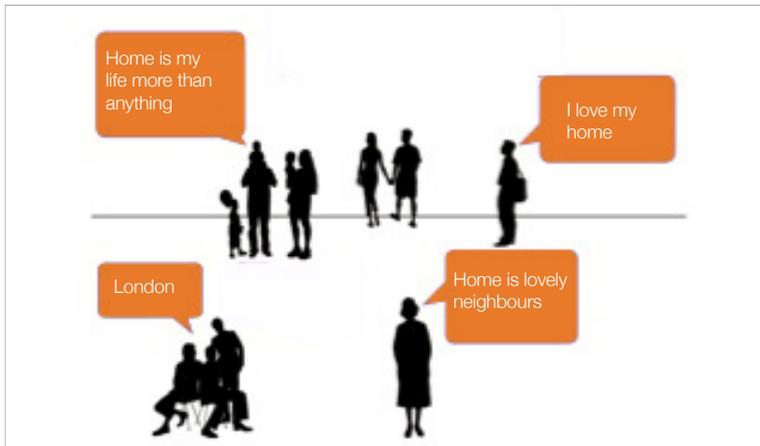
Home was perceived as a place of shelter and fundamental part of a daily routine. This was presented in comments such as: “home is where I sleep and live” and “home means a lot to me because that is where I get my daily bread” that imply that home is the space in which daily activities based upon. Apart from physical shelter, housing also has meaning in terms of being an essential element of the daily journey, routine and is perceived as a safe and reliable place to rest.

Safety / Security



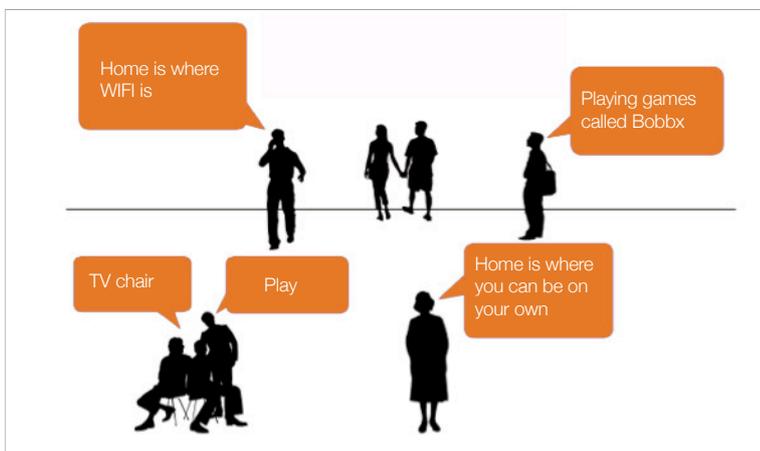
People defined their home as a place that provides protection, comfort and care. Answers such as “home is a place where I can live in happiness with no worries” underline a broader meaning of safety and security that is also related to a feeling acquired beyond the physical boundaries of the house itself

Attachment



Attachment in this context was defined as an emotional bond that people have with the area or place they are living. Throughout our research we discovered the importance of the emotional connection to the place, family and friends, with answers like: "home is lovely neighbours", home is my life more than anything", suggesting that this attachment goes beyond the physical four walls of one's home.

Enjoyment



Home was also perceived by the residents as a place for enjoyment, fun and relaxing. For example - residents stated that: "home is a place where you can say anything...do anything...dance", "Home is where the wifi is", "...playing games".

2.8 Housing aspirations

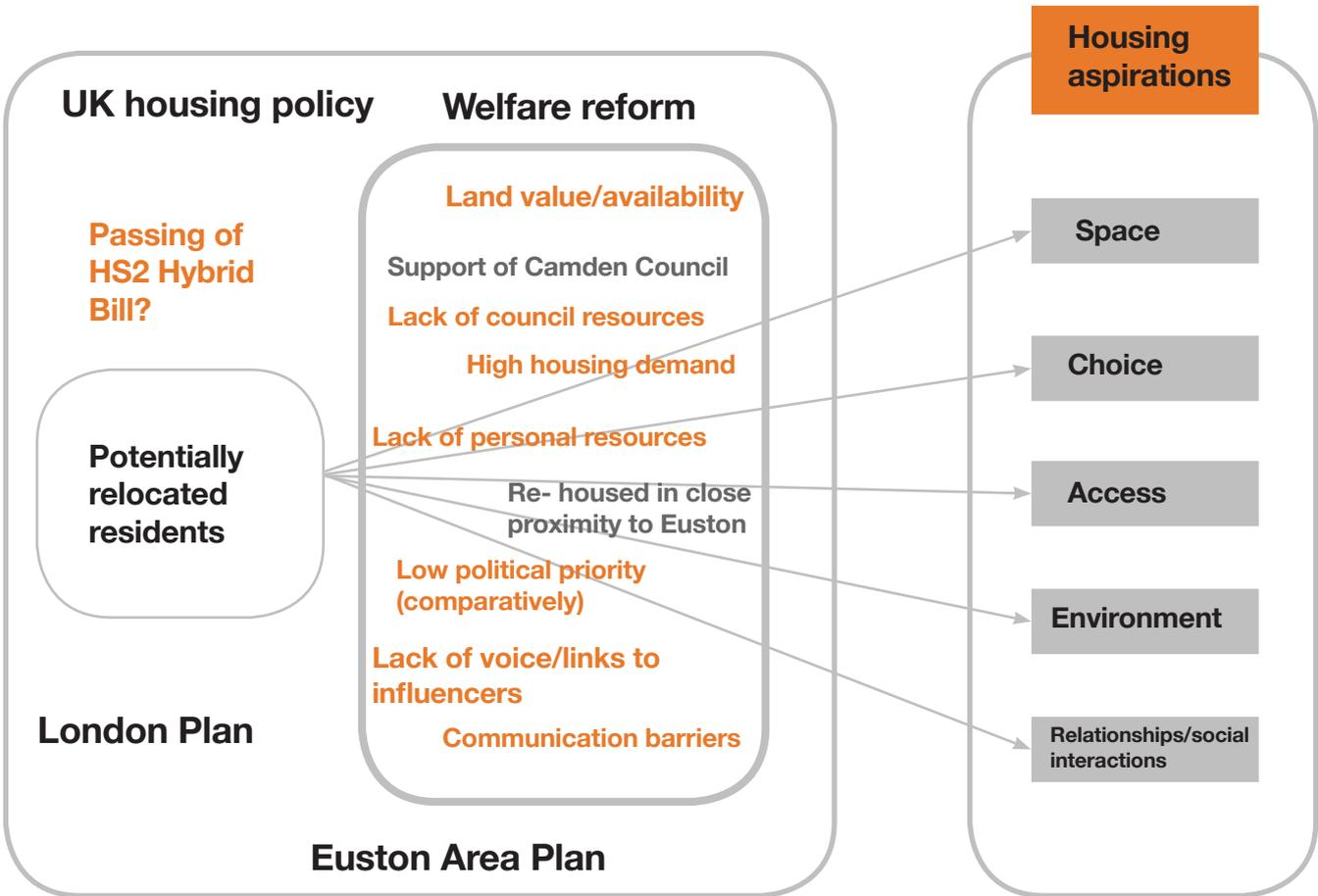
In addition to the values outlined above, residents expressed a number of aspirations related to their lived space.

1. Space: *"We need more bedrooms, bigger bedrooms. Also, I wish I had a bigger kitchen. If I had a bigger kitchen I could invite friends and family over more often."* (Focus group participant)
2. Access: *"I love where I live. It's so easy to get around London, we have fantastic transport links and everything I need is on my doorstep."* (Female resident, 45)
3. Choice: *"I don't have choices and I don't have money to change."* (Male resident, 30)
4. Environment: *"I love my home, and neighbors, also it has a good view. It is a palace, a palace for me."* (Francesco, 58)

5. Relationships/social interactions: *"My neighbours are very good, they respect me a lot. They are very friendly and I am very happy with my neighbours."* (Male resident, 70)

Comparing the aspirations of residents and the discourse of key policy makers and stakeholders, it becomes evident that there is a clear disconnect and potential conflict around the provision of housing, which could heavily influence how the needs of residents are taken into account in the HS2 regeneration process. Although superficially it may appear that these housing aspiration keywords are similar, the vision and routes to achieving these aspirations differ substantially between actors.

Figure 2.1. Enabling and disabling factors affecting residents’ capabilities to achieve their housing aspirations.



The more intangible and qualitative meanings and understandings of housing and home are not reflected within the current housing and regeneration policy context. By comparing the competing aspirations of the key actors in the context of broader policy changes, regeneration trends and the competing priorities of HS2, we were able to build a clearer picture of the enabling and disabling factors affecting residents’ capabilities to achieve their housing aspirations.

grounds and precious few green spaces we have, but now the council is considering building on the tiny patch we have to accommodate the displaced residents. They wouldn't move them to Primrose Hill though, would they? I feel for the Regents Park Estate residents that have to leave their homes, but the reason they want to put them here is because, just like them, none of us in Somers Town have much of a voice or power to do anything about it."

Although the diagram primarily illustrates the capabilities of potentially re-located residents to achieve their housing aspirations, much of the diagram can also be applied to the communities in Camden who will be hosting these relocated residents. However, the fact that relocated residents will be housed in close proximity to their existing homes also generates a number of pressures for the surrounding neighbourhood. As one resident from Somers Town said:

"I love where I live. My kids love where we live. They love nothing more than running around the local play-

2.9 Conclusions and recommendations

Our research findings suggest that regeneration does not necessarily have to conflict with the aspirations of local residents, as long as every conceivable effort is taken to mitigate the potential negative impacts of HS2 regeneration on housing for those directly and indirectly affected. Our research found that **residents were not fundamentally against regeneration in the area, but more anxious about where their place in the regen-**

eration process was to be found, and about the fact that their needs—particularly related to the more intangible dimensions of housing—might not be met.

So that the needs and aspirations of local residents are best taken into account in the regeneration planning process for the area **we strongly suggest further public debate and consultations around housing choices for residents, specifically related to the dimensions of housing identified.** More choice should be available for people

who will be impacted directly and need to be relocated (e.g. viewing plots before any final decisions are made, exploring the opportunity of relocating family/friends together if they wish); and for people who are going to be indirectly impacted such as host communities (consultation about use and prioritization of space).

The question of ‘regeneration for who?’ (Watt, 2013) in this case will become increasingly pertinent in the coming months as the Hybrid Bill process continues.

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3. Secure Livelihoods

Regeneration And Development for Drummond Street traders in Euston, London

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3.1 Introduction

The notion of ‘secure livelihoods’ refers to the capabilities and strategies of individuals to secure the basic amenities of life. Importantly—these basic amenities will change for people with respect to their environment and their expectations, and livelihoods strategies may comprise a diverse set of interactions activated both through the workplace and through other networks and relationships (Datta et al., 2007). The ability to achieve livelihoods security is thus integrally linked with differing well-being aspirations for diverse sets of people, and forms a critical component of any urban regeneration project. This chapter seeks to outline the notion of livelihoods security in relation to the proposed HS2 rail link, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in and around the Drummond Street area of Euston, London.

Urban regeneration and SMEs

Until recently, the United Kingdom experienced almost 16 years of unbroken Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and high economic activity, with SMEs joining the expanding business stream and contributing to the livelihoods security for many residents. In the UK, SMEs employ nearly 14.4 million people, with a combined turnover of £1,600 billion (FSB, 2013). However, the 2008 global economic crisis has had a severe impact upon this growth pattern, generating particularly serious consequences for business owners and employees of SMEs.

Occurring in parallel to this trend, the UK government has proposed a number of urban regeneration projects both in London and elsewhere aimed at strengthening the local economy, the creation of new jobs, renewing areas that have been neglected, and attracting investment. Urban regeneration can be defined as the integrated redevelopment of deprived areas (Eurocities, 2013) and is:

“concerned with the re-growth of economic activity where it has been lost, the restoration of social function where there has been dysfunction or social inclusion where there has been exclusion” (Couch et al., 2003).

It can thus be understood as a tool of redressing the social and economic imbalances emergent out of the recent global downturn, holding the potential to boost the livelihoods security of particular residents, including owners and workers in SMEs.

High Speed Two and Drummond Street SMEs

In London, one such high profile urban regeneration project is the proposed High Speed Two (HS2) rail link— to be based in Euston station, and connecting to major cities in the north of England. In addition to its existing rail, underground, and bus links, the Euston area is close to many major destinations in central London, including prominent institutions such as the British Library, Kings Cross Station, and the University College London. Its central placement and good transport links have made it a prime candidate for the regeneration scheme.

Such claims are echoed within the London Plan (2013), which identifies Euston Station as an ‘opportunity area’, with significant capacity to accommodate new housing, commercial, and other developments. More specifically, proponents of the HS2 proposal have highlighted the power and potential of the new rail lines to transform the economic geography of the UK, providing opportunities for regional growth in both London and beyond. This discourse outlines the significant livelihoods opportunities that will be opened up as a result of the proposal.

Despite such optimism, the construction and placement of the HS2 rail link will generate a number of impacts for residents located in the immediate vicinity of the station, both throughout the construction phase and in the future. As such, there remain critical questions related to the real potentials for the HS2 proposal to support livelihoods se-

curity. In particular, this chapter focuses on the impacts felt by owners and workers of SME's in the historic and cultural center of Drummond Street, located just parallel to Euston Road and best known for its Indian restaurants and supply shops. The small and medium businesses located in this vibrant area have been identified as making a significant contribution to employment, as well as generating an international renown and operating as an important cultural centre.

Those employers and employees based in this area face a series of vulnerabilities in relation to the HS2 proposal, which in many ways compromises the ability of such residents and workers to achieve their livelihoods aspirations. This chapter seeks to outline the abilities and opportunities for the currently proposed regeneration scheme to support these residents to access income and resources to meet their needs and aspirations. The research presented here proceeds in three parts. It firstly draws out three key livelihoods aspirations expressed by these business owners and employees. Secondly it identifies four major ways in which the regeneration process has conditioned the ability to achieve these aspirations. Finally, it draws wider conclusions on the extent to which the proposed Euston regeneration may support a sense of livelihoods security for such individuals.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research was comprised of both primary and secondary research. From secondary sources, policies and government documents relating to livelihoods in London were consulted, including national policies focused specifically on the High Speed Rail and wider policies including the London Plan, the Euston Area Plan (EAP) and the Camden Plan 2012-2017.

Following this analysis, primary research was conducted around Euston station and in Drummond Street, Eversholt Street and Cobourg Street. These sites were selected due to their high concentration of SMEs and potential to be severely disrupted if the HS2 proposal is approved. Data collection was undertaken through semi-structured interviews. This entailed a total engagement with twenty-four individuals representing four different interest groups: 4 from the general public; 8 shop owners; 5 local employees; and 7 regular customers. The 24 interviewees also represented a diversity of gender, race and age identities. Through the disaggregation of different identities, it was possible to trace different responses emergent from different perspectives and experiences.

Figure 3.1. Respondent typology

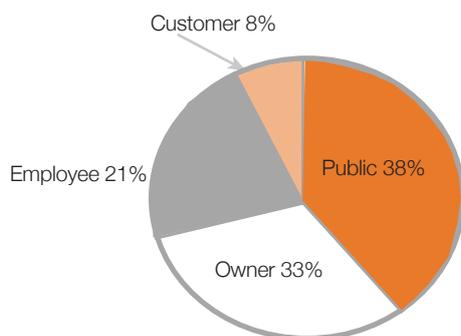


Figure 3.2. Respondent gender split

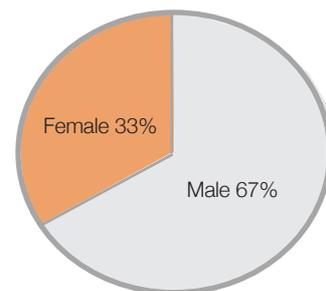


Figure 3.3. Respondent ethnicity

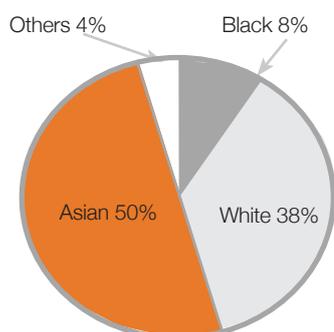
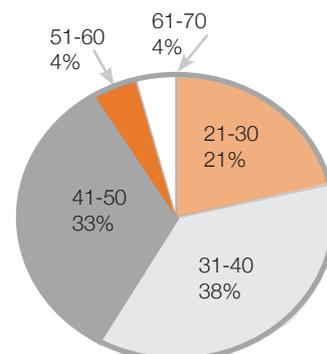


Figure 3.4. Respondent age



3.3 Resident perspectives: livelihoods aspirations

Drawn from the interviews undertaken around the Euston area, local residents and business owners identified three key aspirations which relate to a sense of 'livelihoods security'.

1. Recognise the particular identity of Drummond Street and build upon the sense of belonging among residents

The Euston area is home to many strong communities with a significant historic and cultural contribution, such as the Bangladeshi community based in West Euston and around Drummond Street. The recognition of its significance is identified in the Euston Area Plan (2014), which highlights the potential to build upon the existing character and heritage assets of the neighbourhood. Such sentiment was mirrored in the reflections of Mr. Baguaty, the owner of the Indian Spice Shop on Drummond Street, who commented that he knew many of his customers by name as they came from the local community. This emphasised the fact that such shops do not merely act as a place of business, but also establish a valuable network between the shop and its customers.

Similarly, Mr. Mohammed Saliquie, the chairman of the Drummond Street Traders Association and owner of Diwana Bhel Poori House suggested that to "maintain and share cultural heritage and cuisine" constituted one of his primary interests in relation to livelihoods security. While he highlighted that the loss of employment is a serious concern for businesses in the area, he also indicated that this is matched with a concern to preserve the existing character and nature of these businesses. In both cases, these SME owners indicated the wider significance of their businesses beyond their sheer economic value, encompassing both cultural heritage and established networks and relationships.

2. Recognise locally established networks as a critical asset

Interviews revealed the importance of community networks in helping to secure people's livelihoods. For instance, Mr. Mohammed Salique reflected on the history of gang crime and violence that were once prominent in the area. Articles from newspapers such as the Camden New Journal (Walker, 2003) reported that although the area was home to a large Bangladeshi community, many residents and business owners felt isolated and trapped. As revealed by Mr. Salique: "in the late 80s and throughout the 90s, Drummond Street wasn't a safe area because there was a lot of gang fights", which compromised local businesses. In response, business owners in the area undertook a collaborative effort with the police, Camden Council, and local churches to address these pressing security concerns through a community policing partnership. These efforts on the part of local business

owners helped to create a safe and secure environment for their shops and restaurants to thrive, maintaining and enhancing their own livelihoods capabilities.

Residents similarly highlighted the value of maintaining their daily practices and livelihoods routines. For instance, Mr. Sanchez, a resident of Regents Park Estate, lives with his family and has been working from home for the past 35 years. In interviews he indicated a preference to stay in the area because of the convenient access to community facilities such as the school, hospital, and community centre, as well as to remain close to his network of clients that he has spent years developing. For Mr. Sanchez, this wide network of relations acts as a critical source of livelihoods security which would not be easily replicated in other contexts. This highlights the value of familiar patterns and routines in supporting existing livelihoods strategies.

3. Recognise the particular values of SMEs

As part of the regeneration in the Euston area, business owners identified the wish for greater governmental and policy-level support to obtain a higher business value. In particular, financial help in the form of tax relief schemes was highlighted. While there was some sense that economic regeneration might be possible following the HS2 proposal, business owners expressed serious doubts about their ability to remain viable in the face of serious disruption during the construction phase.

Similarly, research revealed that business owners from Drummond Street, Eversholt Street and the surrounding community did expect the HS2 proposal to generate new economic activities and jobs in the Euston Area. These aspirations have been bolstered by the HS2 report on "Economic Benefit and Jobs", which stated that over 40,000 jobs would be created, including 9,000 construction jobs, 1,500 permanent station jobs, and 30,000 jobs in station redevelopment areas. Camden Council have similarly stated that they were committed to "creating conditions for and harnessing the benefits of economic growth," by attracting businesses, jobs and investment in the Borough (Camden Plan, 2013:10). Likewise, the *High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future* government report indicates that the HS2 link will enable greater productivity and growth through the provision of access to wider markets.

Despite the existence of this potential synergy, residents have identified the importance of qualifying the type and percentage of these jobs that will be provided for those residing or working in the local area. This is reinforced by interviews which highlighted the particular cultural and historical value of the neighborhood and local businesses. Drawing from the example of the Kings Cross redevelopment, one female resident commented that opportunities within this complex did not necessar-

ily match with her own needs and aspirations. A critical element thus consists of disaggregating between ‘job creation’ as a whole, and the types of employment opportunities residents value.

3.4 Impacts of regeneration

The proposed HS2 regeneration plan is a major infrastructure project with serious implications for those business owners and residents located in the Euston area.

In conversation with local residents, there has emerged a clear mismatch between the narratives of HS2, Camden Council, and the aspirations of SME owners and employees outlined above. As asked by Mr. Baguaty, of the Indian spice shop: “How can we be benefit from HS2 when our businesses won’t survive the 10 -year construction period?” This section of the chapter identifies four key areas in which impacts of the regeneration process offer challenges to the achievement of the three livelihoods aspirations identified above.

Environment

As outlined in the HS2 Draft Environmental Statement (2013) noise, vibrations, dust and increased traffic congestion will represent a significant disturbance to the Euston area. The Statement indicates that these effects may be temporary or permanent, and direct or indirect from the construction. It also states that night work will be undertaken, and people around the area are expected to experience noise and light as a result. Many restaurant owners in the area are particularly concerned about how such disruptions will impact their ability to provide a pleasant area to gather and eat. Further, employees expressed the fear that they may be exposed to hazards that interrupt their path to the workplace, as a result of the road construction. While some mitigation measures have been identified in the Draft Environmental Statement—such as the use of quieter equipment—this remains a high worry. This report finds that the implications of these disruptions for residents and SME business owners are not fully considered.

Furthermore, many other businesses located on Eversholt Street are also expected to experience the environmental disruptions outlined above of noise, dust and traffic during the construction phase. Nonetheless, such disturbances are not acknowledged at all in the HS2 London-West Midlands Environmental Statement (2013), which has identified only one shop as significantly affected. This has not adequately recognized many other environment impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, including heavy goods vehicle traffic throughout construction.

Space

The second major implication for owners and employees of SMEs on Drummond Street is related to the spatial changes that will occur as a result of the HS2 proposal. During the construction period a large wall is to be erected, effectively dividing Euston Station and Drummond Street. This is expected to significantly impede access to Drummond Street, blockading the side exit from Euston Station. To date, no specific plan for an alternate entrance to Drummond Street is set. Although the current HS2 design plans include a provision to maintain access between the station and street, many SME owners expressed the fear that they will see a decrease in the flow of customers, and experience critical limitations on parking spaces. For instance, Mr. Salique anticipates that this may result in up to a 70% drop in trade, as a significant proportion of his customers come from the station. Shop owners are already anxious about financial losses to their businesses, and employees over the loss of jobs.

As such, many business owners both in Drummond Street and elsewhere are worried that that they may not survive these heavy disruptions throughout the regeneration process, and fear closure. Moreover, many interviewees expressed the belief that alternative arrangements to support more inclusive spatial arrangements have not been given due consideration. For instance, the Pan Camden HS2 Alliance suggested using a ‘Double Deck Down’ (DDD) plan (2013), to build the new station, creating a double-level station with a smaller footprint than the currently proposed single-level station. Such proposal alleviates many pressures identified by the residents and business owners we communicated with, minimizing the negative impacts of demolition around the Euston area. This points to the necessity of a deeper investigation of the range of spatial impacts and options to better support the livelihoods aspirations of traders located in the Euston area.

Compensation

Significant concerns are also raised in regards to the process of compensation currently offered to those affected by the proposed project. This is underlined by statements in the HS2 Draft Environmental Statement, which maintain that the proposed scheme is *not* expected to have a significant effect on many businesses. However, as explored above, this largely does not allow for a consideration of the numerous ways businesses and local trade will be adversely affected during and after the construction phase, compromising their ability to flourish now and in the future.

Similarly, HS2 compensation documents have not considered the potential increase or decrease in the value of the properties surrounding the station, which may impact

rent and resale value. Instead, compensation measures remain solely focused on businesses 'directly' affected through demolition or decanting, which is unable to recognize the plurality of indirect affects that residents have highlighted above.

This research furthermore suggests that there is an oversight of home-based businesses which may be affected through re-housing. This is evidenced, for instance, in the case of Mr. Sanchez—a small contractor living in the safeguarded area. Mr. Sanchez highlighted his close proximity to his customers as a main factor supporting his success, as his clients are reassured that if alarms go off or problems arise outside of office hours there is someone close at hand to fix them. Under the proposed HS2 scheme, Mr. Sanchez and his family will be forced out of their property. This move will both affect the family's living conditions and will have an additional impact on the business and reputation he has constructed over years in the neighbourhood. As explained by Mr. Sanchez: "I believe if we are forced out of the borough I will lose all my contracts, as I will no longer have that edge on my competitors." While the HS2 proposal indicates the ability to forecast the *growth* potential of the scheme, it is simultaneously unwilling or unable to estimate the losses that such impacts will have on already existing businesses, despite the significant evidence of the challenges faced by SMEs.

Communication

Finally, this research indicated that the HS2 proposal process has been characterized by a protracted lack of information, generating unnecessary confusion and concern. Such gaps have resulted in numerous presumptions and misconceptions that have already begun to affect businesses. For example, some traders indicated a fear that Drummond Street is shutting down, and as such have already sought alternate premises for relocation. This issue was raised, for instance, by the owner of the African Kitchen & Gallery in Drummond Street, who has already planned to relocate as he believes HS2 will completely change the area, and negatively affect his business.

This uncertainty has also generated a number of impacts affecting the current operations of local traders. For instance, the owner of The Bree Louise pub, located on Coburg Street, indicated that he normally holds a contract with his brewery supplier to both provide beers and undertake regular renovations. However, he is now reluctant to undertake normal works in the case that the HS2 proposal leads, as he fears, to a decrease of customers. This compromises his ability to continue investing in his business, placing him in a holding pattern until further information arises.

This lack of information has significantly increased both anxiety and the everyday operations of such SMEs. In the words of one shop owner:

"no one has confirmed or denied anything to me, everything I hear is word of mouth which is extremely worrying. I'm not opposing regeneration... look around, the streets need updating and rejuvenating, but not at the expense of the residents, the community and the business owners. I feel that there is a particular lack of interest and concern over affected livelihoods in the area. The regeneration of Euston station will have positive effects in the long term, but only if the businesses are able to survive the 10 or more years of construction that will take place."

3.5 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have explored the notable discrepancies between the experienced reality in and around the Euston area, and the discourse of regeneration suggested by the HS2 proposal and outlined in the Draft Environmental Statement. In examining these different narratives, we identify the need for regeneration proposals to engage with those intangible values including emotion, family, culture and recognition, which we have found to be of significant importance to those whose livelihoods are made in and around Euston. A realistic understanding of these influences is largely missing from the discussion of the impacts and projections emergent from HS2 discourse, and must be incorporated if 'regeneration' is to fulfill its promise for those residents and SMEs in Euston.

However, as well as challenging the discrepancies between rhetoric and reality, we have also used our findings to draw several solidified conclusions. The first of these is that we feel that **there has been insufficient update on the HS2 development progress and impacts**. This is something that emerged throughout our interviews and interactions, as we encountered a plurality of understandings on the timeline, outcomes, impacts and effects of the scheme on the local area—which had already manifested in a series of negative effects for many businesses. Secondly, we have concluded that **the regeneration plans, and in particular the construction period as set out by HS2, will have an extremely negative impact on SMEs, despite the assessment which suggests no 'significant amenity effect on these businesses'** (Draft Environmental Statement, 10.4.6). The desire to preserve culture and history, as well as ensure values of community and safety, indicate significant implications for any ensuing regeneration process. Our third conclusion is that **the opinions of local residents and businesses were not fully taken into consideration during the planning process**. Consultations were not especially accessible to residents, were carried out hastily, and any expressed opinions or objections—particularly surrounding access and construction—have not been perceived to carry real weight. Finally, **this lack of real consultation has also left gaps in understanding the range of impacts that will occur**. For

instance, while direct displacement has been noted by the HS2 proposal, there is no consideration of *induced* displacements, or of the effects of re-housing on home-based businesses.

After reviewing our findings and conclusions, we also feel that there is merit in considering other spatial configurations, such as the Pan-Camden 'Double Deck Down' plan, which at 25% of the size of the new station proposed by HS2, could significantly reduce those negative impacts identified here. However, if the HS2 plans go ahead as currently proposed, we have compiled the following list of recommendations that we feel should be considered to minimise negative impacts on the livelihoods security of those in the Euston area:

1. Provide a realistic breakdown of the business sectors affected and the potential impacts of a newly established commercial centre in Euston station.
2. Provide a clear communication strategy to engage with

and inform local people and businesses.

3. Provide compensation for directly affected businesses, and devise methods to recognize indirect impacts.
4. Consider home-based businesses.
5. Carry out further face-to-face consultation.
6. Ensure training and skills for local residents and especially youth that are unemployed; give local residents precedence for job opportunities.
7. Consider access to facilities when moving family businesses.
8. Undertake measures to recognise and preserve the history of the surrounding areas.

A due consideration of the concerns and implications outlined above would better address the aspirations and interests of those residents living and working directly within the impact area. Such reflection could more closely align with the hopes and promises of urban regeneration, better supporting the livelihoods security of residents and SMEs that bear the brunt of the impact.

Image 3.1. Ravi Shankar restaurant, Drummond Street



Image 3.2. Raavi Kebab, Drummond Street



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4. Safe Communities

Safety aspirations, regeneration and development for residents of Somers Town ward

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Jiayi Xu

4.1 Introduction

“[Regeneration] encourages us to reflect on the significance of whose city is being compared and who is composing the comparative imaginations that are being put to work”

(McFarlane and Robinson 2012: 770).

The process of urban regeneration often takes place in parts of cities that are considered dangerous. Such logic of city revitalisation is understood to not only hold important economic effects, but to also generate new social spaces, reforming areas that are considered ‘undesirable’ for wider public use. As such: “ensuring that new urban spaces are safe and are seen to be safe are, consequently, among the main priorities” (Raco, 2003: 1870).

While such concerns indicate the potential of urban regeneration projects to support greater levels of well-being, where combined with a market-oriented approach to development this process may see the needs and aspirations of residents within such areas becoming secondary to those of investors looking to unlock capital value. In such circumstances, redesigned spaces may not necessarily respond to the interests of those residents currently living in the area, but are rather developed to attract an influx of new wealth and economic activity.

In these cases, the process of ‘making the city safe’ represents a process of redrawing the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Security may be interpreted in a narrow sense, referring to policing and the exclusion of criminal behavior, and the ‘design-in’ of anti-crime measures to generate ‘more desirable’ neighbourhoods. Such understandings may not address the underlying conditions which generate a sense of insecurity for diverse sets of residents, instead catering to particular city visions that may not resonate with all.

This chapter endeavours to explore these tensions in the case of the High Speed Two (HS2) proposal, examining how residents of the Somers Town area define a sense of security, and how this is envisioned through the HS2 regeneration process. While regeneration processes can open up alternatives to reorganize and redefine the use of space, it is critical to unpack the ways in which this can foster a sense of security for those currently located in the area.

4.2 HS2 and Somers Town

The HS2 proposal is anticipated to have wide-reaching impacts throughout the Borough of Camden, and represents a concerted attempt to re-imagine the social and spatial environment. Importantly, there are serious and pressing safety concerns for those residents located in the immediate vicinity of the station—both in relation to the ten year construction period, as well as in relation to the form and functions of the newly designed spaces.

While the majority of demolition and disruption is centred in the Regent’s Park ward, there is also potential for wider-reaching effects on the surrounding communities, as they absorb those pressures experienced by residents of the Estate. In response, this chapter has chosen to focus more specifically on the area of Somers Town, located in the Borough of Camden, south of Euston and St Pancras station. This is undertaken with the intention of exploring the range of indirect and knock-on effects the HS2 proposal will have on the Euston/Somers Town area, to unfold the wider set of impacts of regeneration processes occurring in the inner Euston core of London.

Somers Town

The Somers Town ward (Image 4.1) has a long and established history in central London, and its location between St. Pancras, King’s Cross, and Euston stations has linked

its narrative with that of the rail lines. Located immediately east of Euston station, the HS2 proposal is similarly anticipated to hold a series of indirect effects for residents in the area, as summarized in Volume 2 of the London-West Midlands Draft Environmental Statement (Table 4.1).

Despite the severity of these impacts, residents of Somers Town are given very little recognition or support to cope with the added pressures of the ten year long construction process, and the unpredictable changes to their community after completion.

With this in mind, this chapter seeks to outline and analyze the threats and strategies expressed by residents of Somers Town in relation to their own safety aspirations.

This is done through the identification of perspectives on 'safety' from Somers Town residents, and a comparative analysis of the extent to which those aspirations are addressed in the formal policies outlining the regeneration strategies of the Euston area.

Figure 4.1. Map of Somers



Table 4.1. Impacts of construction on areas in and around Somers Town. Source: 'London-West Midlands Environmental Statement: Volume 2, Community Forum Area Report', November 2013

Impact	Place	Time
Increase in traffic flows	Roads to the east of Euston station in Somers Town, particularly around Eversholt Street	2015 – 2026 (during construction)
Utility works (e.g. diversion of sewer & gas mains)	Eversholt Street, Phoenix Road, Chalton Street, Maria Fidelis school	2015 – 2026 (during construction)
Construction compound/ Satellite compound	The Royal Mail NW1 delivery office (on Barnby Street), Lancing Street	2016 -2026 (for the Royal Mail office compound); 2020 – 2026 (for the Lancing Street compound)
In-combination effects (including construction noise & visual effects, increase in Heavy Goods Vehicles movements, deterioration in air quality)	Along Eversholt Street, between Euston Road and Barnby Street, particularly St Richard's House on Eversholt Street	Approximately 6 months
Loss / relocation of playground	Lancing street (to the north of Wellesley House)	2020-2026
Loss of street trees	Eversholt Street	During and after construction
Loss of parking spaces	Drummond Crescent, Eversholt Street, Lancing Street	During construction
Effects on air quality	Eversholt Street, Aldenham Street, Polygon Road, Drummond Crescent, Ossulston Street, Chalton Street	During construction
Road closure	Barnby Street	2017 - 2019

4.3 Methodology

The research undertaken for this chapter was informed by a number of methodological approaches. The process opened with a review of policy documents to contextualize how the concept of 'safety' is addressed in the public realm. This was undertaken to generate a comparison between such policy understandings and those community aspirations related to a feeling of safety. Policies reviewed included the HS2 Draft Environmental Statement, The London Plan, Euston Area Plan, and Camden Council Information/Camden Plan.

Following policy analysis, primary research was conducted in and around the Somers Town Ward. A 'mind mapping' activity was adopted to engage passersby in a discussion of what safety meant to them.

Open community meetings were attended to identify the concerns of residents in response to the plans addressed by HS2.

Finally, we conducted 24 session interviews with a total of 33 individuals with ages ranging from 18 to 72 years. 5 interviewees worked in Somers Town, 4 were officers related to the area, and 2 were teenagers who study but do not live in the area. The remaining 22 constituted residents (2 of whom are also students). The research intentionally engaged with a wide representation of individuals to better chart different understandings of security from a range of identities and dimensions. Interviews were semi-structured, touching on more contentious issues as the interview progressed. We found it difficult for younger respondents to participate on an individual basis; therefore this was facilitated as a group interview. The findings presented below are not representative of the neighborhood as a whole, but draw a snapshot of residents' perception in the Somers Town Ward.

Finally, it is important to note that the research faced certain constraints, revealing the sensitivities related to the theme of 'safety'. Conversations with residents often required close collaboration with 'gatekeepers' for an initial introduction: "an individual who is a member of or has insider status with a cultural group" (Creswell, 2013: 154). As one resident stated: "they are still a bit funny [be]cause they don't know you, it's like living in Eastenders." Similarly, we found that younger men were less likely to speak with us under particular conditions. As stated by a young man aged eighteen: "we are happy to answer your questions, but safety isn't what you want to be seen talking about on camera."

Finally, language constraints sometimes proved a challenge, particularly for residents of the many minority ethnic groups, such as the predominant Bengali community.

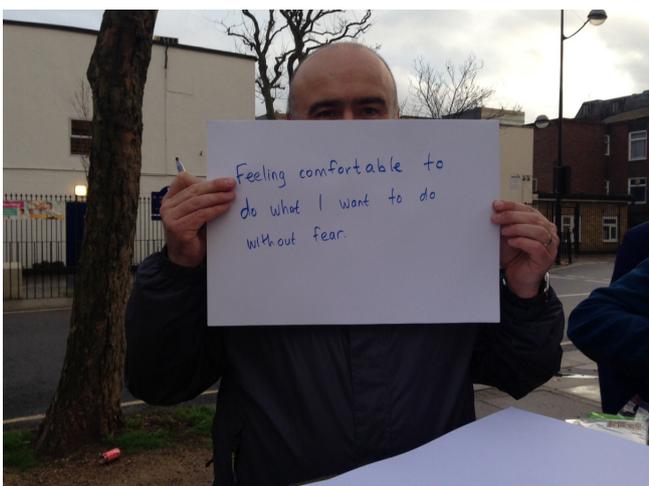
4.4 Resident perspectives

Following the methodology above, a series of interviews and activities were conducted with residents of Somers Town ward to identify their own safety aspirations, perceptions of safety, existing strategies and potential options to address security concerns. Finally, these issues are explored with specific reference to the HS2 proposal. Themes emergent from across these interviews are identified below.

Safety aspirations

The first aim of this research was to identify those safety aspirations as articulated by residents of Somers Town, as a point of comparison with policy approaches. Following initial interviews, this was divided into two key priorities:

Image 4.1. and 4.2. Local perceptions of safety



1. Freedom to use public space
2. The preservation of community relations

Firstly, safety is understood as the freedom to undertake everyday activities, or as explained by two residents: “being able to walk the streets calmly”; “my cousin he should be able to go out and play”. Safety is defined as using public spaces freely and according to one’s own needs. Secondly, safety is identified as the preservation of community relations. There is a strong sense of localness and “a family community”, as explained by one young resident, where “everybody knows your face”. As similarly explained by a long-time resident: “it is safe if you know everybody, if you know your neighbours”.

Perceptions of safety

Most residents stated that they felt safe in their neighborhood. However, an important distinction was often found for more elderly residents, who in several instances stated that their feelings of safety had decreased over the years.

While recognizing the existing sense of security in the Somers Town area, the research also identified several reoccurring threats. ‘Strangers’ were acknowledged as a risk throughout the interview process. In particular, two types of strangers were defined: the foreigner, and the commuter. Among elderly residents, there was a reoccurring concern in regards to the arrival of other ethnic groups to the area. Language barriers had a clear effect on respondents’ perception of safety, as they felt they were unable to relate to new neighbours. As explained by a female elderly resident of Somers Town: “it’s so frustrating when you can’t communicate to people, you don’t feel right about it.” There was furthermore a concern that new arrivals would be unable to follow accepted behavioural norms. As explained by a male resident: “if there are notices pinned and these boys they can’t read English, it means nothing to them.”

This vision of ‘outsiders’ as a threat was also reflected in relation to commuters. Recognizing that Somers Town has become a corridor between King’s Cross and Euston Station, a woman explained: “you’ve got strangers and people walking constantly from one to the other, and you have no idea of who they are, why they’re here.... if you see a familiar face, you’re happy”. Other interviewees also expressed the concern that the continuous presence of strangers makes it easier for people to commit crime and leave the area without being noticed.

There were also specific groups that were identified as threats or as “bad people”, whose presence restricts residents’ freedom to use public space. Drug users and to a lesser extent alcoholics, prostitutes, and the homeless were mentioned, as well as youth and gangs. One mother said safety means: “having somewhere safe for the children to play. There’s a park over there but it’s

got gangs around it.” Certain interviewees also recognized that youth participating in gangs were not always external, but belonged to families within the community. What is also important to note however, is that residents often did not perceive these groups as direct threats, but rather indicated the need for better facilities to effectively support such individuals. For instance, in reference to the homeless, one female resident stated: “they’re not harmful but there’s just too many of them.”

Existing strategies to enhance security

What the above analysis reveals is the importance of familiar faces, patterns, and networks in generating a sense of security for residents; threats were perceived where residents felt the imposition of outsiders. This highlights the importance of building upon community-based mechanisms to bolster and strengthen this sense of solidarity. Importantly, this research identified several such entry points already existent within the neighbourhood. Bonds formed amongst neighbours within Somers Town enabled residents to “look after each other”, as explained by Faye, a long-time resident of Somers Town, acting as a safety strategy amongst the community. This is particularly relevant for those who had children. As one mother stated: “[children] know that their friends’ parents live in that block, or an aunt lives somewhere.”

Communication amongst neighbours also represented an important mechanism for residents to gain information about dangerous places or situations. Focus group activities undertaken with a mum’s group in the Somers Town community centre highlighted the role of such networks in generating a sense of security. Similarly, some respondents—particularly those who had lived their whole life in Somers Town— affirmed that they felt safe as a result of their familiarity with the area. However, other residents, such as long-time resident Joyce, also highlighted the importance of undertaking particular actions to mitigate vulnerable situations: “as soon as it starts getting dark I don’t go out.

Such responses suggest that while residents did feel safe within their neighbourhood, this sense of security stemmed largely from the strategic use of the space, rather than from the perceived lack of risk. Residents reported the modification of their activities (not leaving after dark, informal communication on risks) according to these limitations, and within their sets of relationships, in order to generate a wider sense of safety.

Proposed safety options

When asked about possible measures that could make Somers Town safer, some residents stated that they would not change anything. Others, especially mothers, identified a lack of activities and spaces for children and youth to enjoy their free time. As stated by

one mother: “the younger kids need more of a place to go [...] I think that’s what gets them hanging around in the streets [...] hanging around with the wrong people, they end up falling into bad habits.” This highlights the importance of both protecting the young from bad influences while preventing them from becoming dangerous. In other words, gang activity is identified as both a cause and a product of insecurities present within the neighbourhood.

Other identified strategies included the production of better lighting, a more visible police presence, and a greater reliance on CCTV. For some, these mechanisms could dis-incentivize crime, as stated by one female resident: “there’s not much you can really do as long as it is all lit up and the CCTV cameras are all working.” Gates were seen as another effective strategy to keep unwanted ‘others’ outside of the residential area. For an elderly female resident: “I feel safe only in as much as we’ve now got all this additional security [...] nowadays the idea of security is to lock you behind your doors.

4.5 HS2 and its effects on safety

The research revealed a clear distinction between the perspectives of long-time residents, and those who worked in or had recently moved to Somers Town. In overall terms there is a negative opinion of HS2. However, a small number of interviewees stated that they had nothing against the project, or that it could be beneficial once it is finished. For some workers there is a hope that HS2 may bring more shops and restaurants, making the area busier and, therefore, safer.

However, there was also a consensus that the construction process would have a negative impact on safety. Fear of empty spaces created by demolition was raised when discussing the construction process. As expressed by one resident: “you’re gonna be on your own in this massive block of houses and people are gonna break in to find shelter because they can. And you’re gonna be living next to who knows who and that puts everyone who lives here at risk if they’re not the first person to move out.” Here again is echoed the concern with the increased imposition of strangers onto familiar spaces.

Similarly, the relocation of people represented a concern in relation to the effects it might have on community connections. A student who lives in Somers Town stated that the regeneration process: “will move people out that have been living here for a long time (...) the sense of community will be demolished in a way.” Finally, many residents identified the fear that both during and after construction, more strangers would be coming into Somers Town: “the more transport, the more people is gonna end up here, the more people that’s gonna cut through, the more problems.” On the other hand,

another teenager questioned this assumption, expressing the belief that the presence of construction workers would probably make him feel safer.

4.6 Policy approaches to safety

A review of the major policy documents affecting the process of regeneration in Somers Town and surrounding areas revealed a number of approaches to the issue of safety, as compiled by the authors (figure 4.3).

The following section details how these existing policy approaches address the two priority safety aspirations as identified by residents.

Aspiration 1: Freedom to use public space

Within policy, different approaches were identified in relation to the respondents’ aspiration ‘freedom to use public space’ and the threats and strategies used to achieve this.

Lighting and surveillance

Some residents suggested greater lighting and surveillance to enhance their feelings of safety, expressing the logic that a “feeling of being watched encourages individuals to act appropriately” (Raco, 2007, 316). In relation to this, the London Plan aims to “ensure places and spaces are appropriately lit” (7.19). The HS2 Draft Environmental Statement (DES) suggests the use of CCTV surveillance to be complimented with “adequate security guards” (5.5:2). Enhanced street lighting is also emphasized: “where appropriate, lighting to site boundaries will be provided and illumination will be sufficient to provide a safe route for the passing public” (5.4:1). In this case, strategies refer specifically to what would be put into place around the station and in the construction compound.

Such strategies, if equally adopted in areas surrounding construction, hold the potential to respond to many of the concerns expressed by residents. However, as explored above, increased surveillance represents just one of the dimensions identified by residents as supporting the secure use of public space, also highlighting the importance of everyday routines, social spaces, and networks. A greater policy recognition of strategies also responding to these dimensions would better support the regeneration aspirations as identified by many residents of Somers Town.

Designing out crime

Design is presented in policy as an alternative to enhance safety by reducing the opportunities for crime (Raco 2003). For instance, the London Plan states that “de-

sign should encourage a level of human activity that is appropriate to the location, (...) and to maximize activity throughout the day and night, creating a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times” (7.3:B). Similarly, the HS2 DES refers to the importance of having “clear sight lines (...) around hoardings and fencing with no hidden corners, to avoid, where reasonably practicable, opportunities for anti-social behaviour, crime and to ensure safety of vehicles” (5.6.5).

As explored above, many residents expressed safety aspirations that might be addressed through better design options, particularly in relation to the development of social spaces for children and youth. Another clear apprehension that emerged was the concern with increased traffic from commuters and construction workers. Design alternatives that sought to also address these concerns—through clearly marked routes through the neighbourhood both during and after construction, for instance—might better support these safety ambitions. Nonetheless, other dimensions of security are not fully explored in design alternatives set out in policy documents, which tend to focus on higher levels of surveillance and physical protection, including gates, cameras, and signage

Anti-Social behaviour (ASB)

The definition of ASB in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) is vague, and as a result, different residents may ascribe diverse meanings to the term. However, the behavior of others may be seen as anti-social where it does not fit particular cultural and social rules (Millie, 2008).

Many of the ‘undesirable groups’ identified as dangerous by interviewees (including the homeless and gangs) are commonly included in this category. While, as discussed above, policy approaches often adopt strategies related to physical surveillance or ‘designing out’ crime, a third approach is also evidenced within practices instigated by Camden Council. Drug users, the homeless and others are understood both as people that require help, and as potential risks. Such identified groups are encouraged to alter their conduct or they may face court action (Camden Council Webpage). To this aim, the Council has promoted strategies to support the reporting of those actions that do not comply with the acceptable behavioural patterns.

However, as identified above, for many residents such strategies may simply deal with the symptoms of anti-social behaviour, rather than enhancing the opportunities for alternate pathways. A greater supportive policy and programmatic environment for such vulnerable groups has also been highlighted by residents as a viable strategy to support a greater sense of well-being and security.

HS2 construction process

Many residents interviewed stressed that there would be a greater risk to safety as a result of the HS2 construction process. Policy has attempted to address some of these concerns. For instance, the HS2 DES refers again to the use of lights to prevent crime, and fences to stop unwanted activity: “illumination will be sufficient to provide a safe route for the passing public” (5.4); “maintenance of

Figure 4.3. Policy approaches to safety

Document	Focus	Perception of Safety	Strategies
HS2 Proposal	Surveillance and ensuring physical security	Physical security	Lighting; CCTV; Security guards; Fencing; Clear sight lines
London Plan	Design of spaces; Recognition of importance of community bonds (though not specifically in relation to safety))	An accessible and inclusive environment; Safe play spaces for children and youth	'Designing out' crime; Design of routes and space for convenient movement; Design to encourage 'appropriate' human activity
Camden Council Plan	Focus on people/behaviour; Provision of community facilities and services (not in relation to safety)	Reduction of 'unsafe' or 'antisocial' behaviour (i.e. drug and alcohol abuse)	Clean out 'street population'; Institute community warden service; Develop community safety partnerships
Euston Area Plan	Redesign and development of the area; Does not deal directly with issues of safety	Attractiveness; Safety as a desirable environment; Community safety	Infrastructure enhancement; Creation of new and improved open spaces; Improvement of community facilities and services; Building design

adequate fencing and hoardings [...] to prevent unwanted access to the construction site, to provide noise attenuation, screening, and site security where required” (5.6.1).

While such recognition seeks to address the issue of safety in relation to the construction site (either in or around the worksite), this does not, however, reference safety within the wider area of Somers Town either during the construction process or afterwards. Moreover, here security is defined primarily in relation to physical security, and does not explore any of the dimensions as expressed by residents, including the ability to engage in everyday routines, or strategies to mitigate the movement of strangers. Such concerns are of vital importance given the major disruptions and concerns that will be experienced out of the HS2 proposal.

Aspiration 2: Community relations

The second aspiration identified by residents, the ‘preservation of community relations’, is partially addressed by the London Plan. This policy emphasizes the importance of helping “groups or communities to find consensual strategies or common grounds on which they can work together to create a united vision and a sense of belonging” (3.4). Similarly, the Camden Plan states: “we should not underestimate the challenge of maintaining a strong and cohesive community in Camden” (11). The Council highlights the importance of supporting sustainable communities through the provision of adequate facilities.

In particular, both the London Plan and the Camden Plan refer to the importance of providing spaces and activities for the young. The London Plan states that “safe and stimulating play facilities are essential for a child’s welfare and future development (...) boroughs should ensure the integration of play provision into overall open space strategies” (3.40). Similarly, the Camden Plan focuses on the construction and improvement of facilities to meet neighbourhood needs: “if we get this right then we truly believe our communities will be strong and cohesive” (41). Providing education and employment through partnerships is also referred to as a strategy for improving life alternatives.

Such recognition provides a clear entry point to advocate for greater investments in community interactions. However, it should also be noted that these policy recommendations do not envision a link between community cohesiveness and safety, but rather deal with them

as separate, individual issues, with important implications. For example, security risk posed by gangs are not specifically addressed through policies dealing with community relations, despite the clear identification of this linkage by residents. Similarly, while the HS2 DES references the need to engage ‘communities’ in consultation processes, it does not explore the effects of construction and redesign on existing neighbourhood dynamics and relationships.

4.7 Conclusion

“They [HS2 Ltd.] say we’re gonna make the station better for the local community... by the time they’re finished the local community is not gonna be there anymore” (Somers Town resident).

A key theme reoccurred throughout the research process: safety is not only about the creation of a physically safe environment, but also about the intangible, emotional connections within the community. While this conception of safety has been clearly articulated by many of the residents we interviewed, this was less well developed in the HS2 design plans and associated policy documents.

Being a part of an identifiable community is deeply rooted in Somers Town. The presence of “others”—defined as unfamiliar and unpredictable, and therefore dangerous—appears to threaten the communal bonds that have been created throughout years and even generations (Lupton 1999). In this sense, safety becomes a matter of inclusion and exclusion, of defining who is desired in a particular space. It is a matter of identity and of sense of belonging.

Although the policy approaches explored here address some of the concerns raised by the interviewees, it fails to understand that the breakage of existing community connections will undermine residents’ capacity to feel safe. To respond to the aspirations expressed by residents of Somers Town, policy and further regeneration processes must acknowledge the relevance of a sense of community to safety. If this is not taken into account, traditionally employed strategies such as design, surveillance technologies or encouraging the modification of behaviours, will not sufficiently respond to the aspirations of the residents of Somers Town.

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5. Connected Places

Regeneration aspirations and the HS2

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5.1 Introduction

Urban regeneration is understood in different ways, and interpreted by different parties depending on the focus and interests at stake. Roberts (2000:17) writes that regeneration: “leads to the resolution of urban problems and (...) bring[s] about improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area”. Couch et al. on the other hand, define it in its role to “restore ... lost social function, social inclusion, environment quality.” (2003:2). These two definitions focus on different aspects of urban development, bridging the economic and the social. However regeneration policies often try to promote the transformation of areas in terms of ‘upgrading’ and ‘improvement’, usually focusing solely on economic development.

Understanding connectedness as an element of regeneration is vital because the regeneration of areas not only affects the physical environment, but also the way people experience urban space emotionally. Transforming communities physically therefore has repercussions on their ‘connectedness’ with and within the community. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that the restructuring of neighbourhoods has an enormous impact on people’s lives, their relationship to spaces and places of importance, and their relation to others. Here, we translate this idea of emotional connectedness into two dimensions: connectedness to places, and connectedness to people.

The purpose of the research outlined in this chapter is to determine the aspirations of local residents with regard to connectedness within the Euston Area. Specifically we looked at the places residents socialise and the physical and social factors enabling or limiting their ability to connect to places and people. We then attempted to understand how the HS2 plans might impact on the community’s connectedness and whether it might provide opportunities for residents to achieve their aspirations, or on the contrary, how this regeneration project might disconnect them from the places they value and from the people they communicate with.

5.2 Methodology

Given the time frame and resources, a qualitative research methodology was devised. The study began with examining secondary data, policies and academic literature, to gather information about the context and to help us narrow the research focus. In-depth, semi-structured interviews as a research method were prioritised, and although they provided a smaller scope in representativeness, they enabled us to gather personal narratives of the area. These interviews allowed us to collect detailed information about how people connect to different places in the area and their aspirations as to how they would like this particular place to change or remain as it is. A preliminary assessment of the places important for the community was established following a meeting with local residents held at the St Mary’s Church and a series of observations of the area. A pilot study was designed to test if questions would reveal relevant information in respondents’ answers. It included four interviews in St James Gardens and five interviews in Drummond Street. After this, the questionnaire was re-structured and the phrasing was adjusted.

In total, 26 people were interviewed (11 men and 15 women, from a number of ethnic backgrounds, and ranging in age from 24 to 80 years old). In the Regent’s Park Ward we focused on the Euston Mosque, St James Garden and Regent’s Park Estate. In the Somers Town Ward we conducted interviews at St Mary’s Church, outside the community centre, at the Friday market on Chalton Street, and in front of the Prince Arthur pub.

5.3 Resident perspectives

Connectedness to places

Many respondents talked about a general reduction in the number of physical places where they can gather as a community. Nonetheless, there still exist ‘micro- com-

munities' where people are able to meet, such as within **housing blocks**. For instance, Faye, a Somers Town resident, mentions "I've got nice neighbours ... we have a nice community in our block". Therefore, her block is an important place for her to connect. Janette also mentions that in the Regent's Park Estate, "everyone knows everyone". The HS2 plans demand the demolition of a number of housing blocks, including part of the Regent's Park Estate. The resulting dispersal of residents would severely impact on residents' abilities to stay connected to each other through their homes and neighbourhoods.

Places of worship were another significant meeting place for residents to socialise and connect on an everyday basis, with many residents having attended the church for a number of years; 'it's like a family', 'I can meet people here I grew up with'. St Mary's Church is a place that 'brings people together' (male respondent). Similarly the Euston mosque was identified as a place for socialising for people whose first language is not English, providing a haven from the 'hustle and bustle of the town' (local taxi driver). Whilst the HS2 plans will not affect the mosque directly, one interviewee expressed concern that the impact on local businesses will mean that fewer people will be coming to the area, and therefore the mosques. Another, however, felt that the influx of tourists and commuters would compensate this loss somewhat.

The variety of **local schools** and associated after-school activities also allow families (both children and parents) to feel integrated in their community; parents stated that schools provided a point of connection with other parents and children. Local schools such as the Maria Fidelis School are located within the safeguarded zone required for the HS2 line. Other schools will also be indirectly affected during the construction phase.

Green space was also given significant value by residents, as a meeting place (particularly for young people) but also a sanctuary from the stresses of city life; a place for relaxation, peace and quiet. For instance, one young male respondent remarked that "green spaces are important because they allow you to think, they are a chance for peaceful thoughts". Others also valued the park as "somewhere to get a little bit of peace and quiet". The sports facilities at St James Gardens are also an important feature of outdoor space for young people, who use the park as a general meeting place and for exercise.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of proximity of green spaces to homes, and as a way of physically connecting to different areas. Kate talks about the value of having smaller spaces close to the house, and Russell mentions that "in central London there aren't many places like this". Visitors and residents also walk through the park to get from Euston station to Hampstead Road. These experiences reflect the importance of having such spaces for thinking, relaxing, playing, socialising and trav-

elling. Access to green spaces allows local people to 'reconnect' with themselves, with nature, and with others. They also contribute to the building of personal and collective narratives in the community. As recognised by the City of London: "green spaces are considered a vital resource for London's residents, workers and visitors" (City of London, 2013:3). The revised London Plan also highlights the importance of promoting "places to meet and relax, and green and open spaces [which] are within easy reach of homes" (2013:31).

The HS2 plans include the removal of 80% of St James Gardens, (2013: 9.5.1) and the loss of two playgrounds to be used as compounds during construction works (2013: 5.4.26 & 5.4.31). Although HS2 Ltd has planned the construction of a new playground, they also state that the park will be "smaller than the total area lost from St James' Gardens" (5.4.24). As Camden Council notes, within a high density area such as Euston, where "[open] spaces are limited and extremely valuable... the loss of a space like St James Gardens and Euston Square Gardens would be highly significant" (Camden Council 2013:20). As local resident Mohammed says "this place contributes to wellbeing... if the place was gone I would feel upset".

The destruction of green, open spaces would therefore be detrimental to the emotional and physical wellbeing of local residents, and could cause a series of personal and collective memories to disappear.

The quality of existing space was also called into question by interviewees who expressed disappointment with the design and maintenance of St James Gardens, reinforced by Camden Council's Scrutiny Panel Report on 'Parks and Open Spaces' which expresses 'concerns about the quality of garden squares in the south of the borough' (2005:7). A couple interviewed in the park think that "it doesn't look like it has been looked after, it's a shame really". Mohammed also said that there used to be more benches, and there is no shelter from the rain. The design of the park and its maintenance limits his ability to fully enjoy the park. Additionally, a Somers Town resident interviewed in St Mary's Church assisting a man with a disability, was concerned with the degradation of the pavements and the impacts for accessibility that arise when bus stops are removed due to construction works: "it meant that people who were not able to walk very much couldn't get a bus or do anything anywhere". HS2 Ltd states that during the construction phase there will be traffic and pedestrian diversions (HS2 Ltd, 2013: 9.1.3). Therefore, it can be assumed that people's daily routines and the accessibility of space will also be affected by the construction.

Connectedness to people

Regeneration programmes can destroy local networks and sense of community (Smith, 2011). Residents of areas

who are relocated due to regeneration often experience emotional dissatisfaction since they will have to rebuild new relationships all over again (Power, 2007). Power's extensive research shows that neighbourhoods help to shape people's lives because they form a base for wider activities, providing many of the social services that link individuals with each other, help family development and give rise to a sense of community.

Our findings from the South Camden area support Power's theory that many residents have emotional attachments to the area and believe that neighbourhoods are the 'backbones' that support them when they need it. They are concerned with the possible destruction of places that HS2 will cause and the wider impacts on their community as a whole. The loss of communal spaces and the reduction of places to meet is a significant challenge to local residents who want to stay connected as a community.

One of the significant concerns that arose from the interviews was the fragmentation of the community due to gentrification of the area; according to Lees et al. "the transformation of a working-class area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use" (2008). Feelings of social division are already becoming apparent due to newcomers and new businesses: "the local pubs turned to flats, traditional places turned to coffee places such as Café Nero" (female resident, Somers Town), but residents are also worried that as a direct result of the HS2 plans, the area might become even more unaffordable, therefore driving local residents out of areas they have inhabited for years; "the way of living will become more expensive, rent will come up higher, food will go up higher because of it" (female resident, Somers Town).

5.4 Alternative proposals

In response to the HS2 Limited scheme which will transform the Euston Station area, the Pan-Camden HS2 Alliance local action group has proposed an alternative solution which aims to minimize the impacts of the project on neighbouring residents and businesses. This alternative proposed plan, designated as the "Double Deck Down proposal" (DDD), suggests reshaping the existing station by reducing its width and adding an additional underground level in order to receive the future high speed trains. Thus, rather than adding the necessary new platforms through expansion of the station on its western part, the proposed project would actually result in a nar-

rower footprint. Accordingly, the DDD would avoid the destruction of any dwellings adjacent to the station, as is the case with HS2 Limited's current proposal.

With regards to the findings related to the residents' sense of connectedness, the DDD scheme presents some significant advantages. The most evident benefit of the DDD plan would be the lack of housing demolition and subsequent relocation, thereby avoiding any disruption to people's connectedness to place and community. Moreover, the land made available by the reduction in the footprint of the station would represent an opportunity for the development of new housing or community facilities, which could offset the sense of overcrowding mentioned by interviewees. Finally, the alliance's proposal would respect the interviewees' aspiration to preserve the existing green spaces in the area.

5.5 Conclusion

Regeneration projects such as the HS2 proposal have multiple effects for the residents involved. Some of these effects are less visible than others, nevertheless they need to be taken into account to avoid "pushing something down to the people in this area without taking their concerns seriously" (Pastoral assistant, St Mary's Church). Overall, the people we interviewed expressed the following aspirations. Firstly, **residents want to have more places where they can socialise and more investment in community activities**. Second, they wish to see **more investment and maintenance of the area in general**. This includes green spaces, playgrounds and the streets. Finally, **residents expressed the desire to stay in the area and be able to afford living there**.

In order to minimize the impact on these local aspirations, **alternatives to the regeneration design of the Euston Area should be taken into account**. As elaborated above, the 'Double Deck Down' proposal represents an option more respectful of local needs and regeneration aspirations. The Euston Area Plan that is being designed collaboratively between the Mayor of London, Transport for London and the Camden Council in an ongoing process that takes account of 'current and future needs of local residential communities and ... strategies for meeting them' (Camden Local Development Framework, 2010) should also take into account the important values of 'connectedness' to both place and people as expressed by residents, and substantively engage with these aspirations.

Image 5.1. Hampstead Road Open Space, Regents Park Estate



Image 5.2. Entry gates at St Mary's flats



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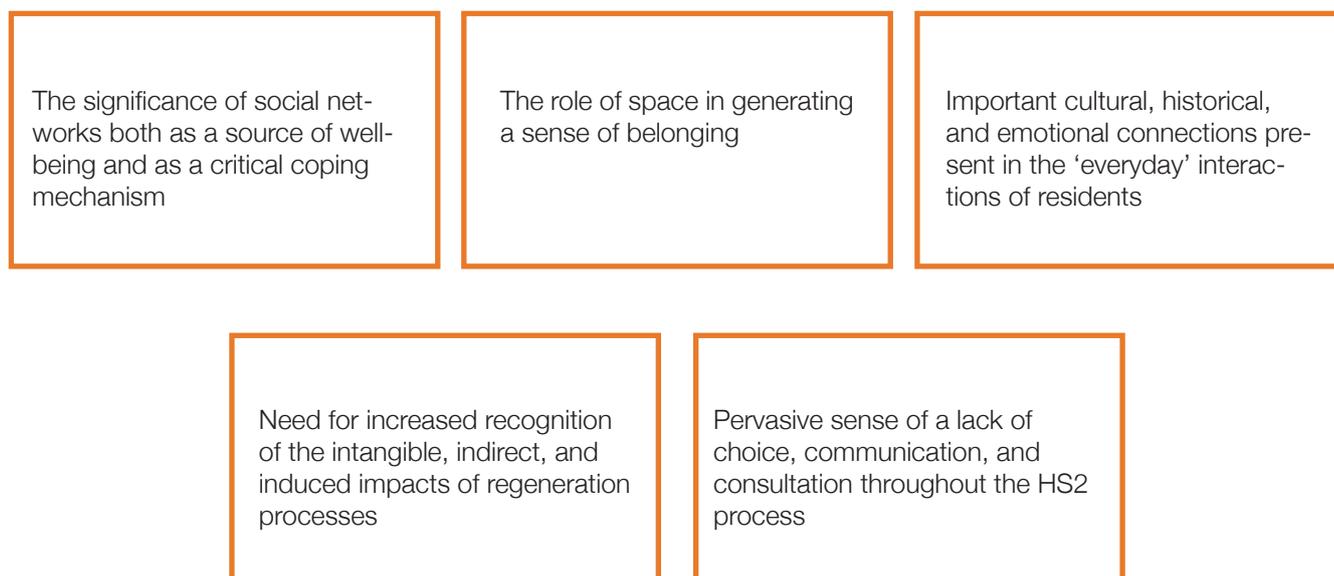
6. Conclusion

The findings presented above have sought a more nuanced understanding of the process of ‘urban regeneration’ as experienced by those living, working, or studying within the Euston area. The report has revealed the different priorities expressed through policy documents such as the HS2 Draft Environmental Statement, Euston Area Plan, and Camden Plan, and the realities and priorities as understood by residents. In particular, it has sought to explore the regeneration aspirations of diverse sets of individuals through the examination of four interrelated

sets of issues: livelihoods, safety, housing, and connect- edness. Such a focus acted as an entry point to query the HS2 proposal and ongoing regeneration processes on the extent to which it responds to those aspirations set out by residents and workers of the Regent’s Park and Somers Town wards.

Drawing linkages across the four chapters, this report identifies five cross-cutting issues (Figure 6.1) emergent from the research, which will be explored in turn.

Figure 6.1. Cross-cutting findings



The significance of social networks both as a source of well-being and as a critical coping mechanism

Responses from across the four chapters consistently referenced the role of social networks in providing an important source of familiarity, legacy and comfort, as well as forming an essential support system in what was often a particularly disabling environment. For instance, in the chapter exploring community safety, residents highlighted the importance of neighbourly relations in supporting a greater sense of protection,

as when children can rely on extended local care networks during times of insecurity. Similarly, the chapter exploring livelihoods revealed the role of local business networks in generating co-production arrangements with local police enforcement to better address the violence disrupting trade in the early nineties. Across the four chapters, and in reference to the HS2 proposal, residents also highlighted the role of social networks in providing valuable information on the changes they may experience in the neighbourhood, which is not felt to be available from HS2 Ltd.

While there is a policy recognition both within the Camden and Euston Area plans of the importance of community cohesion, this has not been recognised within the current HS2 proposal. Regeneration schemes which seek to respond to this aspiration have an opportunity to build upon and strengthen these networks, further investing in community activities and building upon models such as the co-production arrangements which already exist in the area.

The role of space in generating a sense of belonging

Residents highlighted the critical role played by neighbourhood spaces in creating a sense of inclusion or exclusion. While social linkages exist within the area, residents have also observed the increasingly atomised nature of interactions, creating pockets of solidarity in an otherwise disconnected environment. For some residents, this has generated a fear or mistrust of groups and individuals that are not a part of their particular micro-community: whether perceived as strangers, commuters, the homeless, or foreigners. This sense of insecurity has intensified in response to the spatial changes of the HS2 proposal, pushing a more inward facing set of interactions, in turn reinforcing a greater feeling of insecurity. As such, the creation of both physical and symbolic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion exists as both a product of and a contributor to the quality of the urban environment.

This mutually reinforcing relationship was explored in the connectedness chapter in particular, in relation to youth and gang activity. Residents consistently highlighted the lack of space and opportunities for children and young teenagers to engage in positive play and leisure. This was often cited as a precursor and contributor to gang activity—thereby generating further spatial insecurities—which in turn limited the opportunity space for positive interactions for youths. A desire for more green and/or social spaces or community facilities to foster more broad-based interaction and support vulnerable groups has been identified as an important strategy to respond to this challenge. This stands in contrast with policy approaches which focus solely on the physical barriers of inclusion/exclusion through ‘designing out’ crime options, such as fencing, surveillance, and lighting. While these measures are also identified as important by residents, it risks addressing only the symptoms of dangerous activity rather than its drivers, and misses the opportunity to foster more spaces of interaction and inclusion across the neighbourhood.

Important cultural, historical, and emotional connections present in the ‘everyday’ interactions of residents

A third finding is the often unrecognized importance of daily practices, familiarity and routines in generating a sense of well-being. This was explored most clearly in

the housing chapter, which highlighted the significance of ‘home’ as representing more than ‘four walls’. While there has been some policy attention to compensation measures for those residents displaced by the HS2 proposal, this has largely focused on the market values of lost residences, without acknowledging the many other facets which inform homemaking practices, including proximity to family and neighbours, access to community facilities, emotional and historical connection, and a sense of choice. Similarly, the chapter focused on livelihoods reveals the cultural and historical importance of the Drummond Street community in fostering shared aspirations and a flourishing market for traders. Such understandings highlight the limitations of reducing homes and businesses to their economic value, and the need for a greater recognition of the breadth and depth of regeneration impacts.

Furthermore, the chapter focused on safety highlighted the ability to engage in these everyday routines as a critical component of security. The ongoing urban regeneration and transformation occurring in the area has been perceived by many residents as compromising this ability, for instance, when local amenities such as the neighbourhood pub are converted into upmarket coffee shops or chains. Rather than seeking to re-make neighbourhoods in line with particular city visions, regeneration offers the opportunity to build upon and improve the quality of these everyday spaces and practices. This might mean paying greater attention, to concerns voiced by residents over issues such as bumpy pavements, ill-maintained green spaces, or the loss of social centres. Such a focus offers concrete entry points to discuss how regeneration practices can seek to enhance the quality of everyday experiences for local residents.

Need for increased recognition of the intangible, indirect, and induced impacts of regeneration processes

There is a clear need for a greater acknowledgement of the range of impacts directly experienced by residents through the HS2 proposal, as well as the significance of induced or indirect displacements. While there is a sense among many residents that the neighbourhood could benefit from a regeneration process, there is also a feeling that this should not come at the expense of local residents, as is currently being experienced. This requires a more robust and realistic understanding of the range of impacts that are being experienced. For instance, the chapter examining livelihoods security reveals a number of such concerns, including the fear of lost customers as a result of displacement for those in home-based businesses, costs related to business relocation, the inability to undertake routine renovations as a result of the uncertain future, or the wider environmental and atmospheric impacts that will be felt during the construction phase. These concerns have been largely unacknowledged by

the HS2 scheme to date, which focuses primarily on mitigation and compensation only for those businesses and residents directly displaced.

Furthermore, the chapter examining housing uncovered considerable concern about the indirect impacts that will be felt as a result of the HS2 proposal. Residents cited disruptions to traffic, safety, the loss of green spaces and trees, breaks of family and communal networks, and the perception of increased risk from commuters, construction and pedestrian traffic, amongst other worries. In particular, a reoccurring concern is the fear of increased fragmentation and security risks posed by newcomers. Though these issues have been cited to a certain extent in documents such as the draft Environmental Statement, residents maintain that there has been insufficient attention to the social implications and impacts of the scheme, which merits its own investigation in addition to the environmental impact assessment.

Pervasive sense of a lack of choice, communication, and consultation throughout the HS2 process

Throughout the lifespan of the HS2 proposal, and across the four areas examined, residents consistently highlighted the detrimental effects of the poor consultation and communication process. This lack of information has already generated a range of impacts affecting businesses and residents in the area. For instance, the chapter focused on livelihoods highlighted how some shop owners on Drummond Street fear the street will be closed or face significant obstructions, prompting premature closures or relocations. Similarly, for both residents and local traders, the uncertainty of the proposal has resulted in the inability to undertake renovations or improvements to their homes or businesses, with the fear that these may be lost in the near future. Residents have also experienced increased anxiety over the uncertain future, constraining their ability to shape their future.

As explored in the chapter focused on connectedness, there is a general feeling of support amongst many residents for public space interventions. However, clearer and more open communication—free of the technical jargon that has characterized the majority of information to date—would support a greater sense of confidence and well-being for residents, better equipping them to make decisions affecting their homes and livelihoods.

Future action

These five findings generate a number of reflections and concrete proposals related to the regeneration aspirations of residents, students, and workers located in the Regent's Park and Somers Town wards. Firstly, they reveal the importance of guaranteeing community, social, and green spaces to foster increased interaction and local solidarity, and in particular, for facilities which can support vulnerable groups: youths, the homeless, drug users, or recent immigrants. In doing so, the findings identify regeneration as an opportunity to improve upon existing community infrastructure: both the 'hardware' in terms of pavements, lighting, and facilities, as well as investing in the 'software' of networked business owners, schools, families and neighbourhoods.

In relation to housing and development, residents highlighted the critical importance of proximity to their established networks and amenities, as well as ensuring the continued access to and provision of truly affordable homes. Importantly, there is a sense that construction undertaken in the area should not simply replace those homes and amenities that will be lost, but should rather use the opportunity to generate more and better options. In the case of local businesses, Drummond Street traders outlined a number of initiatives that could better support their well-being, including guarantees on the quality and quantity of local jobs, tax relief schemes, the provision of traineeships, and support for community safety partnerships.

Finally, wider attention must be paid to the quality of communication and engagement between residents and HS2 Ltd., which to date has been marred by misinformation, technical jargon, and a perceived lack of meaningful dialogue. Such an approach compromises the process and product of any urban regeneration scheme which seeks to enhance well-being at the wider national scale, and for those most closely impacted.

It is those residents of the Regent's Park and Somers Town wards who will be most significantly impacted by the HS2 process, and as such, their aspirations should be most carefully represented in any ensuing proposal. There is a pressing need to ensure that any regeneration scheme undertaken in the area does not simply seek to mitigate the pressures emergent from such process, but rather strives to support, enhance, and actualise new aspirations for those who currently live and work in the area.

SDP Students Report - DPU

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