# Hulme Crescents says goodbye in vibrant farewell celebration



In March 1993, a vibrant farewell celebration took place to mark the impending demolition of one of Europe's most infamous housing estates, Hulme Crescents, located in Manchester. Originally constructed in 1971, the estate was envisioned as a modern solution for the communities displaced during the slum clearances of the 1960s. Designed with a brutalist aesthetic, the vast U-shaped blocks were intended to accommodate over 13,000 residents; however, by the late 1980s, the structures had deteriorated significantly, becoming synonymous with crime and decay.

The estate, comprising different crescents named after notable Georgian architects—Robert Adam, Charles Barry, William Kent, and John Nash—quickly became a site associated with various social issues. Authorities struggled with the rising problems as squatters, artists, and drop-outs moved in, ultimately pushing the reputation of the Crescents to that of a decrepit and unsafe environment, infested with cockroaches and suffocated by crime.

By 1991, the Government allocated £37 million for the refurbishment of Manchester's housing stock, which led to plans for the demolishment of Hulme Crescents. In response to this impending change, local community members organised a grand community event to celebrate the closure of this chapter in Hulme's history before the bulldozers arrived.

The festivities, orchestrated by the local community arts group Dogs of Heaven, were attended by over 5,000 people. Spectators were treated to a dazzling combination of theatre, music, and a spectacular fireworks display dubbed "Safe as Houses." According to community spokesman Peter Marcus, the event symbolised monumental changes for the area, as he stated, "The demolition will mark the momentous changes taking place in Hulme." Anne Worthington of Dogs of Heaven described the event as a journey from the old Hulme to the new.

The show showcased an impressive array of performances, including a giant skeleton representing the end of the Crescents, and characters dressed as bats, cockroaches, and overflowing bins entertaining the crowd. Multiple highlights included a massive 'Olympic torch' that illuminated the sky and dramatic visuals that brought the decay of the estate to life. The Manchester Metro News published a review describing the event as "a magnificent sound and light show marked an explosive farewell to Europe's most notorious housing estate."

Following this grand celebration, the demolition of Hulme Crescents began shortly thereafter, with a two-ton demolition ball crashing into the concrete structure of Robert Adam Crescent as the community gathered once more to witness the transformation of their neighbourhood. The event encapsulated a moment of transition for Hulme, pointing towards a future where revitalisation and change were on the horizon.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://ilovemanchester.com/hulme-crescent-bohemian-dream-utopian-failure> - This article supports the claim that Hulme Crescents, built in 1972, were initially seen as a modernist housing solution but quickly became notorious for design flaws, social issues, and crime. It also notes the estate's later transformation into a bohemian community before its demolition.
* <https://the-modernist.org/products/hulme-crescents> - This source corroborates Hulme Crescents being Europe's largest public housing development at the time, known for its significant construction and design flaws, and its eventual demolition starting in 1993.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tVEyrUcuaM> - This YouTube video shows footage from the mid-90s and discusses the demolition of Hulme Crescents, highlighting its history, the community's reaction to the estate's decline, and its cultural significance before being torn down.
* <https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchester-England> - While not directly related to Hulme Crescents, this Britannica page provides context on Manchester's history, including its post-war urban development and social challenges, which are relevant to understanding the context of Hulme Crescents' construction and decline.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hulme> - This Wikipedia article provides information about Hulme, including its history and the controversy surrounding Hulme Crescents, offering insights into the estate's rise and fall as part of Manchester's urban landscape.