# Protesters accuse Peabody’s Thamesmead regeneration of ethnic cleansing amid stalled Lesnes Estate plans



Protesters have staged a sit-in at the Lesnes Estate in Thamesmead, southeast London, a site famously featured in Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film adaptation of Anthony Burgess's dystopian novel *A Clockwork Orange*. The demonstrators allege that the ongoing regeneration project underway at the estate is a form of "ethnic cleansing," voicing deep concerns about displacement and gentrification in this community, often referred to as "Little Lagos" due to its significant Nigerian population.

The protest occurred at the Lakeside Centre on Saturday night, where around seven protesters briefly occupied the arts centre run by the charity Bow Arts in partnership with the Peabody housing association, which leads the redevelopment effort. They unfurled a banner reading "end art washing," reflecting local frustration not only at the physical redevelopment but also at perceived cultural erasure. The community fears that the estate’s 816 existing homes will be bulldozed and replaced with 2,778 new residences, fundamentally altering the demographic makeup and affordability of the area.

Esther Ovba, a Nigerian resident, told *The Guardian* that many in the community are being relocated to areas like Rochester and Gillingham while wealthier, predominantly white, middle-class newcomers move in. "To me it feels like ethnic cleansing," she said, summarising a sentiment widely shared by residents.

The estate, originally built in the 1960s and once celebrated as the "town of tomorrow," has seen significant change with the arrival of the Elizabeth Line, making Thamesmead more accessible and attractive to commuters. This accessibility has driven interest in regeneration projects, especially by Peabody, which received outline planning permission from Bexley Council in October 2022. However, the application has since been referred to the Secretary of State, delaying progress.

Residents have been protesting since early April 2024, occupying empty homes to prevent demolition and demanding better compensation and guarantees that their community will be preserved. At least one occupation involved a 69-year-old resident, Dolorosa Buhari, who voiced fears that the redevelopment would tear the close-knit community apart. Petition campaigns have also emerged, urging Peabody to consider refurbishing existing homes rather than demolishing them, citing the estate's historical significance and the disruptive impact of displacement on long-term residents.

The situation has been exacerbated by deteriorating living conditions in some parts of the estate. Reports indicate that around a quarter of the original residents remain, living in increasingly run-down buildings prone to infestations and mould, with large portions of the estate boarded up and nearly deserted. This decline has been used by supporters of the redevelopment plan to argue that demolition and rebuilding represent the best way forward for the area.

Peabody maintains that the regeneration will bring much-needed modern homes and community facilities. John Lewis, Peabody's executive director for sustainable places, highlighted investments made since 2014 in community spaces and cultural projects in Thamesmead. He assured displaced residents that those living in social rented homes would continue to pay social rent in brand-new housing, while homeowners would have options to purchase similar or nearby homes, with extra financial support offered to facilitate buying in the local area.

Bexley Council has acknowledged the anger and concerns of the residents, emphasising their commitment to ensuring local voices are heard throughout the regeneration process, though the council clarifies that Peabody, as the lead delivery agency, oversees the programme.

However, residents and campaigners argue that the scale of new homes designated for social rent is insufficient, pointing to figures suggesting only a small fraction of the new developments would be affordable to those currently living in the estate. This fuels wider fears of gentrification and the erosion of the community’s cultural identity.

As plans remain stalled amid these tensions and the application's referral, the fate of the Lesnes Estate hangs in the balance, representing a broader struggle facing many London communities caught between development pressures and the preservation of longstanding neighbourhoods.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14969631/protesters-sit-clockwork-orange-estate-development.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68788065), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/lesnes-estate-residents-regeneration-stalled-b1205482.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14969631/protesters-sit-clockwork-orange-estate-development.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14969631/protesters-sit-clockwork-orange-estate-development.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68788065), [[7]](https://www.thecanary.co/uk/news/2024/04/03/lesnes-estate-peabody/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14969631/protesters-sit-clockwork-orange-estate-development.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68788065), [[5]](https://www.change.org/p/stop-peabody-demolishing-the-lesnes-estate-thamesmead-london-refurbish-don-t-demolish-c12fcc92-2fe1-4ff0-b901-bec27a5e565a), [[7]](https://www.thecanary.co/uk/news/2024/04/03/lesnes-estate-peabody/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/lesnes-estate-residents-regeneration-stalled-b1205482.html), [[6]](https://londonnewsonline.co.uk/news/many-of-thamesmead-estates-long-standing-residents-want-revamp-not-demolition/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14969631/protesters-sit-clockwork-orange-estate-development.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14969631/protesters-sit-clockwork-orange-estate-development.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.selondoner.co.uk/news/24052024-watch-abbey-wood-residents-fight-to-save-their-homes-from-demolition)
* Paragraph 8 – [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68788065), [[4]](https://www.selondoner.co.uk/news/24052024-watch-abbey-wood-residents-fight-to-save-their-homes-from-demolition), [[7]](https://www.thecanary.co/uk/news/2024/04/03/lesnes-estate-peabody/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14969631/protesters-sit-clockwork-orange-estate-development.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68788065> - Residents of the Lesnes Estate in Thamesmead, southeast London, have been protesting since April 6, 2024, against plans to demolish their homes for a new development. Bexley Council granted outline planning permission to Peabody housing association in October 2022 to replace 816 existing homes with 2,778 new ones. Protesters, including 69-year-old Dolorosa Buhari, have occupied an empty property to prevent demolition, expressing concerns over inadequate compensation and the impact on the community. Peabody maintains that regeneration is the best option for the estate.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/lesnes-estate-residents-regeneration-stalled-b1205482.html> - Residents of the Lesnes Estate in Thamesmead, featured in Stanley Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange', are facing deteriorating living conditions as regeneration plans stall. Approximately a quarter of residents remain in the estate, which has become nearly empty and boarded up. Bexley Council granted outline planning permission to Peabody housing association in October 2022 to replace 816 current homes with 2,778 new ones. However, plans have stagnated, leaving residents in limbo and facing issues like cockroaches, mice, and mould.
4. <https://www.selondoner.co.uk/news/24052024-watch-abbey-wood-residents-fight-to-save-their-homes-from-demolition> - Residents of the Lesnes Estate in Abbey Wood, southeast London, are protesting against plans to demolish their homes for redevelopment. Peabody housing association secured planning permission from Bexley Council in October 2022 to replace the estate with 1,950 new homes, of which only 61 would be designated as social housing. On April 23, 2024, residents protested outside Bexley Civic Offices, voicing concerns over gentrification and the lack of affordable housing. Campaigners have occupied a vacant house on the estate, demanding dialogue with Peabody and Bexley Council about refurbishing existing units instead of demolition.
5. <https://www.change.org/p/stop-peabody-demolishing-the-lesnes-estate-thamesmead-london-refurbish-don-t-demolish-c12fcc92-2fe1-4ff0-b901-bec27a5e565a> - A petition on Change.org calls for Peabody housing association to halt plans to demolish the Lesnes Estate in Thamesmead, London, and instead refurbish existing homes. The petition highlights the estate's history, including its role in providing housing for residents escaping overcrowded conditions in inner-city London and its appearance in Stanley Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange'. The petition argues that demolition would displace long-standing residents and destroy a close-knit community, urging Peabody to consider refurbishment as an alternative.
6. <https://londonnewsonline.co.uk/news/many-of-thamesmead-estates-long-standing-residents-want-revamp-not-demolition/> - Residents of the Lesnes Estate in Thamesmead, southeast London, are protesting against plans to demolish their homes for redevelopment. Since April 6, 2024, protesters have occupied an empty house on the estate, opposing Peabody's plans to build 1,950 new homes. Bexley Council granted outline planning permission to Peabody in October 2022, but residents are calling for refurbishment of existing homes instead of demolition. They argue that the current homes are in good condition and that demolition would disrupt the community.
7. <https://www.thecanary.co/uk/news/2024/04/03/lesnes-estate-peabody/> - Residents of the Lesnes Estate in Thamesmead, southeast London, are protesting against Peabody housing association's plans to demolish their homes and redevelop the area. The protest, organized by the resident campaign group LesRes and supported by Housing Rebellion, took place on April 6, 2024. Peabody's plan involves replacing the estate with 1,950 new homes, of which only 61 would be social rent. Residents fear displacement and are calling for refurbishment of existing homes instead of demolition.