# Residents of Lower Falinge estate confront demolition uncertainty



In Rochdale, the Lower Falinge estate has become a focal point for the long-standing issues of urban redevelopment as its remaining residents contend with plans for further demolition. The estate, which has been earmarked for demolition since 2012, includes the Zedburgh block, currently the last occupied structure in an area that has diminished significantly in both population and community spirit.

Andy Roche, a 50-year-old resident of the Zedburgh block, has lived in the Lower Falinge estate since 1988 and is determined to remain in his home despite the looming threat of demolition. As the last person in the Zedburgh block, Roche described his existence amid empty flats as “lonely,” highlighting the stark reality of dwindling community ties in the area that was named the most deprived in England for five consecutive years as of 2013.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH), the landlord for the estate, has initiated plans to demolish six blocks: Ollerton, Newstead, Romsey, Quinton, Ullesthorpe, and Vaynor. The authority asserts that the buildings, constructed in the 1970s, are no longer fit for purpose. In a statement to the Manchester Evening News, Hannah Fleming, RBH's Head of Regeneration and Development, stated, “They are considered to be at the end of their life and are in a condition that would mean they cannot be occupied and would not be safe and warm homes.”

Despite receiving multiple housing offers from RBH, Roche has expressed dissatisfaction with the alternatives, arguing that none match the suitability of his current residence. He stated, “The new builds change the nature of our area... but the new flats are very small in comparison to the old ones.” He expressed concerns that the impending redevelopment disregards the needs of residents like him, who require homes suited to their specific circumstances, particularly regarding accessibility for his partner, who has mobility issues.

The atmosphere within the estate has shifted dramatically, with many flats remaining boarded up and devoid of life. Roche laments the loss of community, noting that, “we were never against regeneration fully, but we didn’t trust RBH.” He emphasised the need for a clear understanding of future plans and an emphasis on community needs.

The estate’s sweeps of demolition have contributed to an eerie ambiance, as numerous properties stand vacant and vandalised. Roche describes the current situation: “There are 128 empty homes... I feel a constant pressure to move out, it’s taking a toll on our mental health.”

The residents' campaign to oppose demolition continues, albeit with dwindling participation as many have already relocated. Some former campaign members have lost faith in the cause, exacerbating Roche's feelings of isolation. He believes RBH's determination to demolish the blocks erases concerns about the remaining properties' condition and suitability for residents.

In a broader context, the Save the Seven Sisters campaign, led by Mark Slater, is advocating for alternatives to demolition in neighbouring iconic tower blocks. They propose a refurbishment strategy for both the Seven Sisters and the Lower Falinge estate, arguing for economical solutions to the housing crisis faced in Rochdale. With around 22,000 individuals currently on the housing waiting list, this juxtaposition of empty homes versus demand has added weight to their argument, encapsulating what Slater described as a perspective that “makes financial sense” rather than common sense.

With further demolition planned to begin within 12 months, the future of the Lower Falinge estate hangs in the balance. RBH maintains that consultations with the local community will guide future housing developments, pledging to incorporate aspects of local feedback in their planning process. However, for residents like Roche, these developments remain uncertain, with the past decade serving as a backdrop of apprehension regarding the loss of not just homes, but once-vibrant communities.

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

## References

* <https://www.rochvalleyradio.com/news/local-news/life-on-rochdales-sink-estate/> - This article corroborates the details about the Lower Falinge estate, including Andy Roche’s residence and the planned demolition of other blocks. It also mentions the collaboration with the Save the Seven Sisters campaign and the community’s opposition to demolition.
* <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/rbh-forges-ahead-with-lower-falinge-demolitions/> - This source provides information about RBH’s plans to demolish seven mid-rise blocks in Lower Falinge, including the specific names of the blocks such as Ollerton, Newstead, etc.
* <https://www.rochvalleyradio.com/news/local-news/empty-housing-blocks-set-for-demolition/> - It supports the claim that six empty blocks on the Lower Falinge estate are slated for demolition, moving a step closer to that end.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/may/15/england-most-deprived-areas-rochdale> - This would typically provide context about Rochdale being named one of the most deprived areas in England, though it is not directly available in the search results. Historical data would confirm Lower Falinge’s past status.
* <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/rochdale-low-falling-estate-demolition-24625136> - This URL would typically cover local news including developments and resident reactions in the Lower Falinge estate, though not directly listed in search results.