# Hulme Crescents farewell: A community celebrates change before demolition



In March 1993, a notable community event marked the imminent demolition of Hulme Crescents, one of Europe’s most infamous housing estates, located in Hulme, Manchester. Built in 1971 as a modern alternative for those displaced by slum clearances in the 1960s, the Crescents consisted of large, U-shaped concrete blocks designed to accommodate over 13,000 residents. Each block was named after a renowned Georgian architect—Robert Adam, Charles Barry, William Kent, and John Nash. However, by the late 1980s, those ambitious designs had devolved into neglected structures plagued by crime and neglect, with the authorities eventually conceding defeat as the buildings became infested with cockroaches and occupied by squatters.

Amidst the £37 million revitalisation funding received from the Government in 1991, which targeted various declining parts of Manchester including the Crescents, a momentous community celebration was organised shortly before the demolition commenced. This event was orchestrated by the local community arts group, Dogs of Heaven, and was intended as a symbol of transformation for the area. According to community spokesman Peter Marcus, "The demolition will mark the momentous changes taking place in Hulme." He emphasised that the downfall of the Crescents would signify positive developments for the future.

The highlight of the celebration attracted over 5,000 attendees, featuring an engaging mix of theatre, dance, music, and a vibrant fireworks display. Anne Worthington from Dogs of Heaven remarked, "People will be taken on a journey from the old Hulme to the new." The event, fittingly named "Safe as Houses," portrayed the end of the Crescents through various artistic expressions, including dramatic performances where characters dressed as bats, cockroaches, and overflowing bins paraded below a grand "Olympic torch" that illuminated the night sky with a stream of fire.

The farewell spectacle left a significant mark, being featured in a review published by the Manchester Metro News, which praised it as "a magnificent sound and light show" and referred to it as an “explosive farewell” to the notorious estate. The review captured the day’s highlights, notably the destruction of four cars that were pushed off the six-storey structure of William Kent Crescent as part of the performance.

Just days following the event, the atmosphere shifted as the community gathered once more to witness the physical demolition of the structures that had been a source of substantial social issues. A demolition ball, weighing two tons, struck the side of Robert Adam Crescent, marking the definitive end of an era for one of the most talked-about housing estates in Europe.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://ilovemanchester.com/hulme-crescent-bohemian-dream-utopian-failure> - This article corroborates the original purpose and design of Hulme Crescents as a modernist housing project, its decline due to design flaws and neglect, and its eventual transformation into a hub for artistic expression.
2. <https://www.mdmarchive.co.uk/artefact/33283/Hulme-Crescents-The-Eagle-Hulme-Video-1993> - This archive entry supports the account of a community event, 'Safe As Houses,' organized by the local arts group Dogs of Heaven, which celebrated the impending demolition of Hulme Crescents with a dramatic and artistic performance.
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tVEyrUcuaM> - This YouTube video provides footage and context about Hulme Crescents, including their early promise, subsequent decline, and eventual demolition, reflecting the community's mixed feelings about their legacy.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hulme#Hulme_Crescent> - This Wikipedia entry details the history of Hulme Crescents, including their construction in the early 1970s, their design and impact on residents, and their eventual demolition in the mid-1990s.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/oct/07/hulme-manchester-estate-redevelopment> - This article from The Guardian explores the redevelopment of the Hulme area after the demolition of the Crescents, reflecting on how the community transformed and the new housing that replaced the old structures.
6. <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/local-government-law/on-site-demolition-begins-at-hulme-crescents-1692.html> - This article discusses the demolition process of Hulme Crescents, providing additional details on the physical dismantling of the estate and the community's reaction to this significant change.
7. <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/nostalgia/last-days-europes-worst-estate-31352768> - Please view link - unable to able to access data