# Residents fight against demolition plans at Lower Falinge estate in Rochdale



In Rochdale, the Lower Falinge estate has become a focal point of contention, as ongoing plans for demolition threaten the remaining occupied blocks of flats. Among the few residents still clinging to their homes is Andy Roche, who, alongside his partner, remains the last occupant of the Zedburgh block. This estate has been earmarked for demolition since 2012, but efforts to halt the bulldozers continue amid concerns over the future of social housing in the area.

The Zedburgh block, which houses Roche, is now the only one still occupied out of 24 flats. The socio-economic backdrop for Lower Falinge is stark; in 2013, it was labelled the most deprived area in England for the fifth consecutive year. Presently, neighbouring blocks such as Ollerton, Newstead, Romsey, Quinton, Ullesthorpe, and Vaynor are slated for demolition by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH), the estate’s landlord.

Roche, 50, has lived in the Zedburgh block since 1988 and remains unwilling to relocate despite repeated offers from RBH. Speaking to the Manchester Evening News, Roche noted: “The new builds change the nature of our area. I have nothing against the new flats, but the new flats are very small in comparison to the old ones." He articulated concerns surrounding the integrity of his community, which he feels has been damaged by ongoing demolition efforts and the subsequent loss of residents. “It’s about what their plan actually is and we just don’t know,” he remarked.

The atmosphere throughout the estate is noticeably somber, with many flats now abandoned and forlorn, their windows boarded up. Roche pointed out the unsettling transformation from a once-bustling community into a landscape marred by emptiness and neglect. He expressed a sense of being under pressure to vacate, which he said is taking a toll on his and his partner's mental health.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing contends that the demolition is a necessary step towards redevelopment, arguing that the 1970s structures do not meet the needs of the current housing landscape. Hannah Fleming, RBH's Head of Regeneration and Development, stated that “the only sustainable and affordable solution is to demolish them and build new homes that will meet the aspirations of the current and next generation of customers.” The authority insists that a community-centric approach will guide the design of new constructions, and consultations with present residents will shape future developments.

However, dissent remains among local residents and campaigners. The Save the Seven Sisters group, which includes advocates for other threatened flats in the area, has explored alternatives to demolition. Mark Slater, who leads this group, outlined a refurbishment plan for the iconic tower blocks in the area, arguing that retaining and renovating existing structures would be more cost-effective and responsible in light of the ongoing housing crisis. He commented: "They are continuing despite the whole community being opposed to it. This doesn’t make common sense, it just makes financial sense."

The unfolding situation at Lower Falinge encapsulates a broader narrative of social housing challenges in the UK, particularly as approximately 22,000 individuals in Rochdale remain on the waiting list for housing. The juxtaposition of empty homes as Roche pointed out, with those experiencing homelessness in the vicinity of the estate, only adds complexity to this ongoing debate about community, redevelopment, and social responsibility.

As the fight against demolition continues, Roche's resolve remains firm, illustrating the difficult dynamics faced by residents seeking to preserve their homes in the face of systemic changes. Despite the pressure and the dwindling numbers of support, Roche remains hopeful, stating, “We’ve not lost hope completely. We feel like we have the councillors backing, as they feel the loss of social housing is terrible."

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.rochvalleyradio.com/news/local-news/empty-housing-blocks-set-for-demolition/> - This article supports the claim that Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) plans to demolish six empty housing blocks in Lower Falinge, citing the need for regeneration and the blocks being at the end of their life.
2. <https://www.rochvalleyradio.com/news/local-news/life-on-rochdales-sink-estate/> - This piece highlights the socio-economic challenges in Lower Falinge and the presence of Andy Roche as the last occupant of the Zedburgh block, emphasizing the impact of ongoing demolitions on residents.
3. <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/rbh-forges-ahead-with-lower-falinge-demolitions/> - This article confirms RBH's plans to demolish several blocks in Lower Falinge, including Ollerton, Newstead, Romsey, Quinton, Ullesthorpe, and Vaynor, as part of a broader regeneration strategy.
4. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the original source article providing the context for Lower Falinge's situation, including resident reactions and broader concerns about social housing.
5. <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/rulesofcourt.pdf> - This document does not directly support any specific claim about Lower Falinge but is a legal reference. No relevant information was found to support the article's claims.
6. <https://www.mass.gov/guide-to-evidence/article-xi-miscellaneous> - Similar to the previous legal reference, this guide does not provide information relevant to the claims about Lower Falinge or social housing concerns in Rochdale.
7. <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/im-last-one-block-flats-31394794> - Please view link - unable to able to access data