# Bishop's Avenue's decline: from opulence to neglect amid housing crisis



Once heralded as London’s most prestigious address, Bishop's Avenue—famously dubbed "Billionaires' Row"—is now emblematic of decline and dereliction, encapsulated by the dilapidated state of its once-glorious mega mansions. One such property, Fair Hill, listed for £20 million, perfectly illustrates the area's fading allure despite its storied past. Situated near Hampstead Heath, this sprawling 13,900-square-foot mansion, originally home to foreign royalty, boasts an array of grand features including six reception rooms, eight bedrooms, a nightclub-style party room, marble flooring, and a sweeping staircase. However, as showcased in the Channel 4 programme *Britain’s Most Expensive Homes*, the property’s interiors are heavily dated and in urgent need of renovation, with the nightclub resembling a worn-out village hall and bedrooms appearing stark and neglected.

Industry experts point to the mansion’s aesthetics as a major barrier to attracting today’s super-wealthy buyers. Pav Wasik, founder of Uptown Interiors, described the residence as evoking "late ’80s cruise ship luxury," dominated by outdated shiny surfaces and gold finishes that now feel garish rather than glamorous. Dhilnawaaz Trotman of DKT Interior design highlighted the incongruity between the home’s architectural grandeur and its current shoddy decor, observing, “Money bought the postcode, not the palette.” Jeremy Fine of Godfrey and Barr, featuring on the show, suggested that the home’s best future could lie in demolition and redevelopment, as a refurbishment of this scale often proves more complex and costly than starting anew.

Such circumstances reflect a broader narrative of decline in Bishop's Avenue, a street once favoured by global elites including royalty, and famously home to the last King of Greece and even pop star Justin Bieber at one point. Now, the street is plagued by neglected homes, overgrown grounds, rubbish accumulation, graffiti, potholes, and incessant construction noise, largely due to Barnet Council’s perceived lack of effective maintenance. Several properties stand boarded up or derelict, some spanning acres of run-down land acquired by foreign investors in the early 1990s during geopolitical upheaval. Notably, some of these mansions have been gutted to make way for complexes such as Riverstone Bishops Avenue, a retirement apartment development due to open soon.

This disrepair has sparked debate about the utilisation of such prime London real estate amid the city's chronic housing shortage. Reports from various investigations reveal that around a third of these mansions remain empty, many in a state of near ruin—complete with water-damaged interiors, overgrown vegetation, and decaying fixtures—yet collectively worth hundreds of millions of pounds. The Guardian and other outlets have drawn attention to the paradox of these vast spaces lying unused while affordable housing demand soars. A derelict site owned by an Isle of Man-registered firm, for instance, is earmarked for luxury apartments valued at over £200 million, but with no guarantee these will be developed. Instead, the owner has negotiated a £2.5 million payment to the council’s housing fund, sidestepping direct provision of affordable units.

Local residents express frustration at the situation, lamenting the roadworks, parking shortages, contractor rubbish, and disruptions caused by ongoing redevelopment projects. Several large mansions have recently been subdivided into flats or reimagined as care homes, reflecting shifting market realities and a move away from the mega-mansion ideal. Even estate agents acknowledge that while properties on Bishop’s Avenue are still fetching prices ranging from £4 million to over £100 million, some owners and developers see greater value in demolishing and rebuilding than restoring.

The juxtaposition of grandeur and neglect on Bishop’s Avenue raises significant questions about urban planning, wealth concentration, and sustainable housing strategies in London’s luxury property market. While the street retains its iconic name and status on paper, its fragmented and often forlorn state serves as a cautionary tale of how affluence alone cannot preserve prestige without ongoing investment, thoughtful design, and community integration.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-15172927/No-wonder-billionaires-row-lost-shine-Mansion-sale-20M-complete-nightclub-resembling-1980s-cruise-ship-proves-super-rich-deserted-Londons-desirable-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/31/inside-london-billionaires-row-derelict-mansions-hampstead), [[6]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/inside-dilapidated-ruins-350million-mansions-14273348)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-15172927/No-wonder-billionaires-row-lost-shine-Mansion-sale-20M-complete-nightclub-resembling-1980s-cruise-ship-proves-super-rich-deserted-Londons-desirable-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-15172927/No-wonder-billionaires-row-lost-shine-Mansion-sale-20M-complete-nightclub-resembling-1980s-cruise-ship-proves-super-rich-deserted-Londons-desirable-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/property/luxury/can-justin-bieber-save-the-bishops-avenue/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-15172927/No-wonder-billionaires-row-lost-shine-Mansion-sale-20M-complete-nightclub-resembling-1980s-cruise-ship-proves-super-rich-deserted-Londons-desirable-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/20/london-billionaires-row-derelict-site-affordable-homes-architects-blueprint), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/31/inside-london-billionaires-row-derelict-mansions-hampstead), [[5]](https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/london-scandal-350m-worth-mansions-lie-empty-billionaires-row-1434753), [[6]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/inside-dilapidated-ruins-350million-mansions-14273348)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-15172927/No-wonder-billionaires-row-lost-shine-Mansion-sale-20M-complete-nightclub-resembling-1980s-cruise-ship-proves-super-rich-deserted-Londons-desirable-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/20/london-billionaires-row-derelict-site-affordable-homes-architects-blueprint), [[5]](https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/london-scandal-350m-worth-mansions-lie-empty-billionaires-row-1434753)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-15172927/No-wonder-billionaires-row-lost-shine-Mansion-sale-20M-complete-nightclub-resembling-1980s-cruise-ship-proves-super-rich-deserted-Londons-desirable-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/20/london-billionaires-row-derelict-site-affordable-homes-architects-blueprint> - An article from The Guardian discusses a derelict site on London's Bishops Avenue, known as 'Billionaires' Row', and the potential for developing up to 300 affordable homes on the site. The current owner, an Isle of Man-registered company, has permission to build luxury apartments likely to sell for more than £200 million, but there is no guarantee those homes will be built. The council's policy is to demand at least 35% affordable housing on new developments, but the owners' agents negotiated cash contributions of £2.5 million to its housing fund instead. The site has fallen into ruin since the early 1990s when nine Saudi-owned mansions were left empty. The article highlights the contrast between the area's opulent past and its current state of disrepair, raising questions about the use of prime real estate in London and the housing crisis.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/dilapidated-tenbedroom-mansion-on-the-bishops-avenue-on-sale-for-ps22-5-million-a3165771.html> - This article from the London Evening Standard reports on a dilapidated ten-bedroom mansion on The Bishops Avenue, London's 'Billionaires' Row', listed for £22.5 million. The Victorian villa has been empty for over a decade, with vegetation growing through its boarded-up windows. Despite its derelict state, the prime location in the exclusive area has attracted interest from potential buyers. The article discusses the property's potential for redevelopment, including the possibility of converting it into luxury apartments, and highlights the challenges of restoring such a large and historic property.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/31/inside-london-billionaires-row-derelict-mansions-hampstead> - An investigation by The Guardian reveals that a third of the mansions on London's Bishops Avenue, known as 'Billionaires' Row', are standing empty, including several that have fallen into ruin after being largely unused for nearly 25 years. The article describes the deteriorating conditions of these properties, with water streaming down ballroom walls, ferns growing out of floors, and pigeon and owl skeletons scattered across rotting carpets. Despite their derelict state, the properties are valued at an estimated £350 million. The article raises concerns about the use of prime real estate in London and the housing crisis.
5. <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/london-scandal-350m-worth-mansions-lie-empty-billionaires-row-1434753> - This article from the International Business Times UK reports that one in three homes on London's Bishops Avenue, known as 'Billionaires' Row', are standing empty, yet their absentee owners make millions in profit even as they slide into disrepair. The road, linking Kenwood House and East Finchley, has been called 'one of the most expensive wastelands in the world' by a local developer. The value of empty properties on the road is believed to be in the region of £350 million. The article discusses the implications of such vacant properties in the context of London's housing crisis.
6. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/inside-dilapidated-ruins-350million-mansions-14273348> - An article from the Mirror Online provides an inside look at the abandoned ruins of £350 million mansions on London's Bishops Avenue, known as 'Billionaires' Row'. The article describes the deteriorating conditions of these properties, with ferns scaling gold-leafed staircases, collapsed ceilings, and drained indoor swimming pools. Despite their derelict state, the properties are valued at £350 million. The article highlights the contrast between the area's opulent past and its current state of disrepair, raising questions about the use of prime real estate in London and the housing crisis.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/property/luxury/can-justin-bieber-save-the-bishops-avenue/> - This article from The Telegraph discusses the potential revitalisation of London's Bishops Avenue, known as 'Billionaires' Row', with the reported rental of a mansion by pop star Justin Bieber. The article highlights the contrast between the area's opulent past and its current state of disrepair, with many mansions standing empty and in need of restoration. The potential involvement of a high-profile tenant like Justin Bieber is seen as a possible catalyst for change, but the article also discusses the challenges of restoring such large and historic properties in the current economic climate.