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STREET FIGHTERS

MARTIN DUNSCHEN, GRANBY TRIANGLE, TOXTETH, LIVERPOOL

“The majority of the houses in my street are boarded up. It was a kind of sink estate, I guess. Houses were cheap, which meant the council could use them to offload problematic tenants. So the area declined in every aspect – economically, the shops moved out, socially because people who had problems were basically left to their own devices here, and people moved out and abandoned the area.

The council had a few years ago a proposal and decided on it and in there is written that Cairns Street has to be demolished. They are planning the demolition of this street. It was made clear to us more or less that you can maybe change things on the fringes but the core plans will be implemented as we want them.

We are very careful in the investment in our house because there is always the question with everything you do, will I be able to take it with me when eventually we will be kicked out.

Some of the neighbours were fed up with the rubbish in the street and they managed to inspire people in the street like us to just take control of our own environment.

You know, we started this planting project, we put up hanging baskets, we cleaned houses, we cleared away rubbish. Especially in front of the empty houses we have big planters and are growing vegetables.

We’ve had some amazing effects...people coming through the street and discussing sweetcorn – can you grow sweetcorn in this country, we used to grow it in Jamaica. I remember that very vividly, this conversation with an elderly man from Jamaica.”