

## **CIARA LEEMING**

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### **Street Fighters**

#### **Steve Ord, Liverpool Picton**

“They go round the city demolishing every landmark you’ve got.

My infant school’s been demolished; my junior school’s been demolished; most of my senior school’s been demolished; the church where my parents married has been demolished; the hospital where my brothers were born has been demolished...you’re about to demolish my former grandparents’ home where they died, and you’re demolishing the place where I’ve lived for my entire life.

I’ve only been back twice since the streets started being boarded up, and I’ve only done it with other people – when you’ve been telling other people what’s been going on – so it’s sad and there’s a tear in the eye but because you’re with someone you’re distracted, talking about what’s gone on rather than saying “that rubble there’s where my granddad died”....you know...it’s horrible, it’s not nice.

For our area there was approximately 350 houses in the initial phase. We actually won part of our public inquiry. Our inspector recommended that a third of the houses be removed [from the demolition plan] but then the Secretary of State gave Liverpool City Council more opportunities to provide more evidence and then on the stroke of a pen they took all the houses anyway. It’s a lie that you’ve even got a chance.

For us they were saying terraced housing is ‘obsolete’. Well, okay. ‘Victorian housing, is obsolete’....well let’s start by bulldozing those lovely rich cities like Cambridge and London, where these houses are actually far, far more valuable than the new build equivalent.

I don’t have a problem against demolition. I have a problem with being lied to and you’re building rubbish to replace quality homes. And those houses will not last because they’re built to really poor quality, whereas the ones that are being demolished are some of the best Victorian homes in the area.

With that money you could have refurbished four-five-six-times as many houses and built better quality homes. You could have knocked two homes into one occasionally to provide three and four-bedroom large family homes. You could have knocked down every other terrace to give people gardens and driveways and to thin the area out if that’s what you needed to do.

I mean, I was there for my full public inquiry...the best part of four weeks long. And opposite me for virtually the entire inquiry were two barristers, four solicitors from the legal team, another solicitor from the council to help them up behind the scenes, plus all these key directors they’re bringing in, you know, to justify it all.

Just compulsory purchase them, tell people ‘we’ll help you out, we’ll pay you a decent amount of money’....

I haven’t seen any fair play in anything they’ve ever done. You know, even after they’ve taken the property they haven’t been fair. They took the best part of three months even to give me the 90 per cent [payment] because we still disagree on the valuation. All that rent that’s been lost, that was 45 per cent of my income. It’s gone. They haven’t paid me a penny for it yet.

As I say, I wouldn’t recommend anyone go down the route again. You’re wasting your time, you’re giving yourself so much stress and aggravation, it just isn’t worth it. It ruins your life.”