

Streetfighters

Ann Hillman, Barrow in Furness

“The more that come empty, the more dispondent you got, because you start thinking to yourself – well, you haven’t got a cat in hell’s chance here. And there comes a point when you think ‘*well I’m going to have to go.*’ You don’t want to go and you just hang on as long as possible, but you know it’s going to happen.

“We got a lot of druggies going in the back yards and living in the sheds and leaving their needles about. One night old Rita and Arthur, old people, some lads kicked their back door in, but they thought the house was empty. They came back and apologised later on but you can imagine the fright in these old people.

“But I think other than that we didn’t really have a lot of problem...it’s just the mess. And you start getting rats, because it wasn’t cleaned properly, see. It’s like a dumping ground there now. You know, they’ve knocked some of the back walls down and...it’s just a mess. And so in the end you just think ‘*I’ve had enough*’.

“As much as I wanted to stay, and at that particular time, even if they’d have turned around and said ‘*right ok, we’ll save your houses, you don’t have to go,*’ I’d have stayed and hoped for the best...that maybe the street could go back to how it was. But to be honest I don’t think it ever would.

“It was such a good community, I don’t think it would ever be the same again. If the same people could go back...even the people in the rented properties...if they could all go back, yeah. But I don’t think it would ever, ever be the same.

“They wanted to do demolition but they said they’d do consultation and see what the people wanted. But that was just a farce because they didn’t do what the people wanted anyway. They didn’t listen. We put in plans of our own what we would like – you know, refurbish, do the street up...we didn’t ask for too much. But it weren’t good enough they said, they said no.

“You know, they strung us along and built our hopes up here and there by saying ‘*oh, maybe*’. And like I said, we were told ‘*oh right your houses are safe*’. And then they changed their minds.

“That’s not fair and that’s not right to build people’s hopes up like that. And then to just grab them away from them like that, it’s just not fair.”