

Same on the outside



Different on the inside



layers of disparity amongst residents

A closer look beyond the uniform



exterior of Chobham Manor & East Village

reveals multiple, intersecting

1. unaffordable spaces, unequal living
2. transient communities
3. different pathways to participation widen the gap

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These are the messages, thoughts, and findings of Zeinab (not real name), a local resident and citizen social scientist from Newham.

Zeinab conducted research on the obstacles to prosperity that local residents in Chobham Manor & East Village experience, as part of the *Prosperity in east London 2021-2031 Longitudinal Study*.

To find out more about Zeinab and *Prosperity in east London 2021-2031*, take a look at the final pages of this zine.

# 1. unaffordable spaces, unequal living

Given the mix of social housing, shared ownership and private housing, Chobham Manor and East Village comprised of residents from starkly different backgrounds. Yet, residents with different tenancy backgrounds expressed a shared feeling that living costs were rising and that housing, amenities, and shops in their neighbourhood were unaffordable. How they responded to these rising costs, however, varied significantly. While some could eat out less or avoid expensive shops, others waited in line at food banks.

*“Even affluent residents don’t necessarily have the disposable income to be spending on the artisan shops in the area”*

- Jim, local amenities manager

Kelly, a mother living in East Village social housing, said that even though she works full-time, almost all her income is spent on rent



Jane, a private tenant living on an average wage in the East Village, shares her flat with 2 people. Without sharing, she would be unable to afford rent

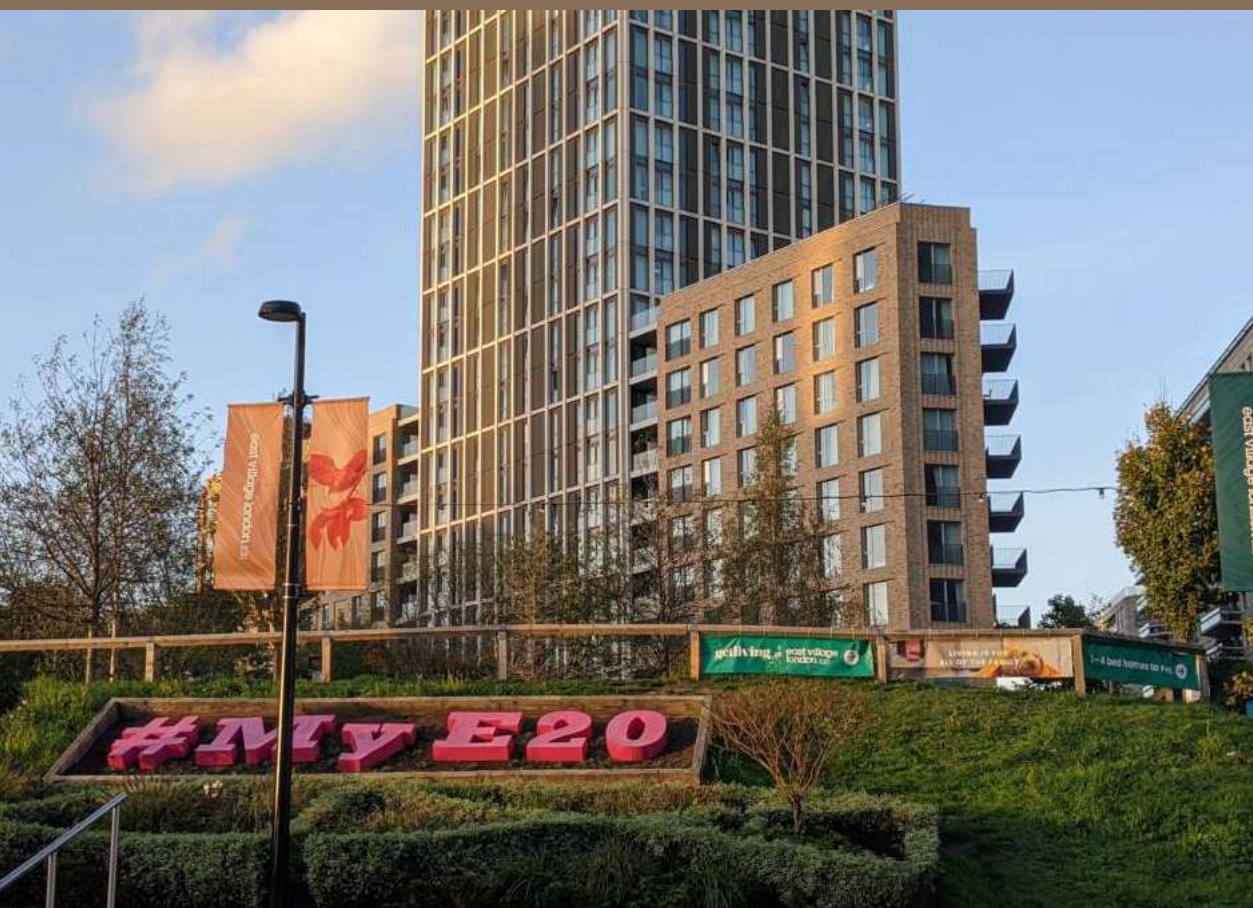


Existing research on the legacy of Olympic housing promises in East Village sheds further light on this situation. Under private developer Qatari Diar, which markets East Village under the Get Living London brand, the former Olympic

Athlete's Village (now known as East Village) will become a long-term private rental scheme. According to research by Watt and Bernstock (2017), when the scheme is complete, overall levels of affordable housing will decline from

49% to 33%, with social/affordable rent accounting for only 51% of these units. This is below the London Legacy Development Corporation's Local Plan requirements which stipulate that 60% of all affordable housing units should be at affordable/social rent in new developments. Moreover, even when housing is deemed 'affordable', units are often still offered at a price that is pegged to market rents. For instance, Bernstock and Watts report that East Village offers 356 units at discounted rent, which is usually 70% or 80% of market rent. Given that a 2-bedroom rental in the private element of the scheme costs between £2,400 to £2,700 per month, discounted 'affordable' rent would cost between £1,680 and £2,160 a month. This

amounts to more than two-thirds of a typical Newham resident's gross monthly pay - the median gross weekly pay in Newham is £640.8 (Office for National Statistics 2022).



## 2. transient communities

Given high living costs, many of the residents in East Village and Chobham Manor could not afford to stay long-term. Young professionals who could only afford to stay there by sharing accommodation eventually planned on moving elsewhere on their own. Foreign residents on short-term visas also soon left. For lower income residents in social housing, the high living costs also made it difficult for them

to stay. Although many liked the comfortable surroundings and nice buildings, some spoke of looking for cheaper alternative housing. These constant movements made communities transient.



*“there seems to be a cyclical pattern to the community, lots of foreigners on short term visas then going back, families moving out etc. there’s no long-term sense of building community”*

- Jim, local amenities manager



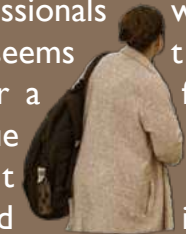
**Kelly is looking for cheaper housing elsewhere. her social housing unit in East Village is too costly.**

“The area is pretty good – clean, safe. But housing is expensive. Despite social rent it is still very high. If I work full time, all my income would be spent on rent and that doesn’t make it easy. I’m looking elsewhere for more affordable social housing”



**Jane would like to continue living in East Village but can’t afford living there solo.**

“The place is very convenient in terms of transport, It’s more appealing to working professionals who work central. But residency seems transient in nature. People live here for a few years then move on. I would continue living here to explore more if I could, but it’s not a possibility. I’m not able to afford it solo.”



### 3. different pathways to participation widen the gap

Different residents had very different ways of finding community and building connection. While younger professionals and students built small pockets of community over the digital sphere (e.g. local Whatsapp groups for selling items, dog-walking), others, especially elderly residents living in social housing, had few avenues to escape isolation. Although volunteering at the nearby food bank and attending events at community spaces in the older parts of Stratford

offered some way out of loneliness, these were few and far away.

With limited shared infrastructure for social cohesion, separate spheres of social activity seemed to widen the gaps between people.



**what does infrastructure for social cohesion look like?**

*“This area - you have a drycleaner, which caters for certain users and groups of people. It’s not like a launderette which ordinarily serves as a place where anyone can go and is pretty accessible, and also a place where people might meet others and have a chat.*

*Where I grew up, you have so many places of worship, community centres, local convenience shops, libraries, and they’re still there! And that’s where you see the hustle & bustle; everyone going about their life and business. Walking through the area on a weekday afternoon, it felt like a very distinct and quiet area with little to no activity. ”*

- Zeinab

Cora, a 60+ year-old lady who lives on her own in a social housing unit in East Village, wants to stay for as long as she can but feels lonely.

"I've had the same neighbours for 7 years but I only know them by face, not by name. We're not on talking terms. It also applies to others in the block, I'm not close to anybody. Everybody keeps themselves to themselves. I volunteer at the food bank and I'm involved with the tea dance at Newham Town Hall once a month. If it was more frequent, I would be there"



Mark lives in private accommodation in Chobham Manor. He feels that there is tension between private and social housing tenants. The built environment is segregated between the two.





If you could speak to a policymaker now, what would you say?

“There’s so much physical and infrastructural development happening. But at local grassroots levels, what investment are you putting into the human aspects of life?”



**Zeinab** (not her real name)

Citizen Social Scientist in her early 30s.

Grew up in Newham and continues to live there.

# PROSPERITY IN EAST LONDON 2021-2031

*Prosperity in east London 2021-2031* is a 10-year mixed-methods study tracing the effects of large-scale and long-term urban regeneration on local communities in east London. The study equips local residents with the tools to examine prosperity in their communities, producing citizen-centred insights on people's lived experiences of regeneration.

During wave 1 of the qualitative research, which took place between September and October 2021, 10 residents from 10 areas in east London, were employed and supported by east London community organisations: Compost CIC, Hackney Quest, and Leaders in the Community, to engage in 3-months of part-time research and training. Through [UCL's Citizen Science Academy](#), they received practice-led training on research design, ethics, qualitative data collection, and social impact strategies. The teams carried out interviews and walking ethnographies exploring obstacles to prosperity in their different neighbourhoods, and are currently involved in presenting this research to policymakers.

Managed by the Institute for Global Prosperity's (IGP) [Prosperity Co-laboratory UK](#) (PROCOL UK) in partnership with the [UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies](#), the study was co-designed with members of the [London Prosperity Board](#) – a cross-sector partnership between the IGP, UCL East, London government, public agencies, businesses, the third sector, and local communities in east London, to change the way decision-makers think and act for prosperity.



## REFERENCES

Office for National Statistics. 2022. "[Earnings and Hours Worked, Place of Work by Local Authority.](#)" October 26, 2022.

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