

# ELEPHANT'S TRUMPET

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Elephant's Trumpet is a collaboratively produced community newspaper that aims to organise, promote and share resources, ideas and concerns about Elephant & Castle shopping centre.

It brings together the voices of traders, local organisations, residents and users of the shopping centre in mutual support and solidarity, and campaigns for the communities that belong there.

## ISSUE 1

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# SEPTEMBER 2019 DEMOLITION DATE

Just before last Christmas the shopping centre owners, Delancey put forward a planning application to Southwark Council for the demolition and redevelopment of the shopping centre. Southwark Council will now decide whether or not to give Delancey permission for the redevelopment. It has said it will probably do so before the end of the year.

The application covers not just the shopping centre but the London College of Communication (LCC). This would also be demolished if permission is given. New shops, cafes, restaurants, bars, offices and nearly a thousand new homes are proposed for both sites. A new cinema, music venue and leisure facilities are also promised, along with a new entrance to the Northern line tube.

Delancey proposes to begin the redevelopment on the shopping centre site in September 2019, finishing in October 2023. Work would begin on the LCC site in June 2023, lasting until Sept 2027. People have been talking about the redevelopment of the shopping centre for many years and some are relieved that it now

appears to be happening. But nothing is decided yet, and there are at least three big problems with Delancey's proposal.

First, Delancey's proposals for helping the shopping centre traders are not good enough. A business advisor, Tree Shepherd has been appointed, but other proposals, such as a 'relocation fund' are vague. There is also a lack of other premises for traders to move into and Delancey's proposals for affordable retail space, let at below market rates, are also poor. This should be 10% of the whole amount, Delancey is only offering 5%.

Finally, Delancey has not included any social rented housing in the housing it proposes to build. These are three good reasons for Southwark Council to reject Delancey's planning application. They break the rules for new developments.

In the meantime local people and traders have made over two hundred objections to Delancey's current plans. You can make an objection or comment yourself through this link below.

[www.35percent.org/uptheelephant/](http://www.35percent.org/uptheelephant/)

## TRADER'S DEPUTATION TO THE COUNCIL

Shopping centre traders made their case for practical support during the redevelopment of the

centre at a meeting of Southwark Council's Executive Committee  
*Story continues on the next page*

Continued from front page.

in May. Patrick Duffy, owner of the Palaces Bingo and Bowling, Emad Megahed, of the Tekkroom, Patria Roman Velaquez, of Latin Elephant and Adriana Hoyos of H&S Legal, met the Council Committee.

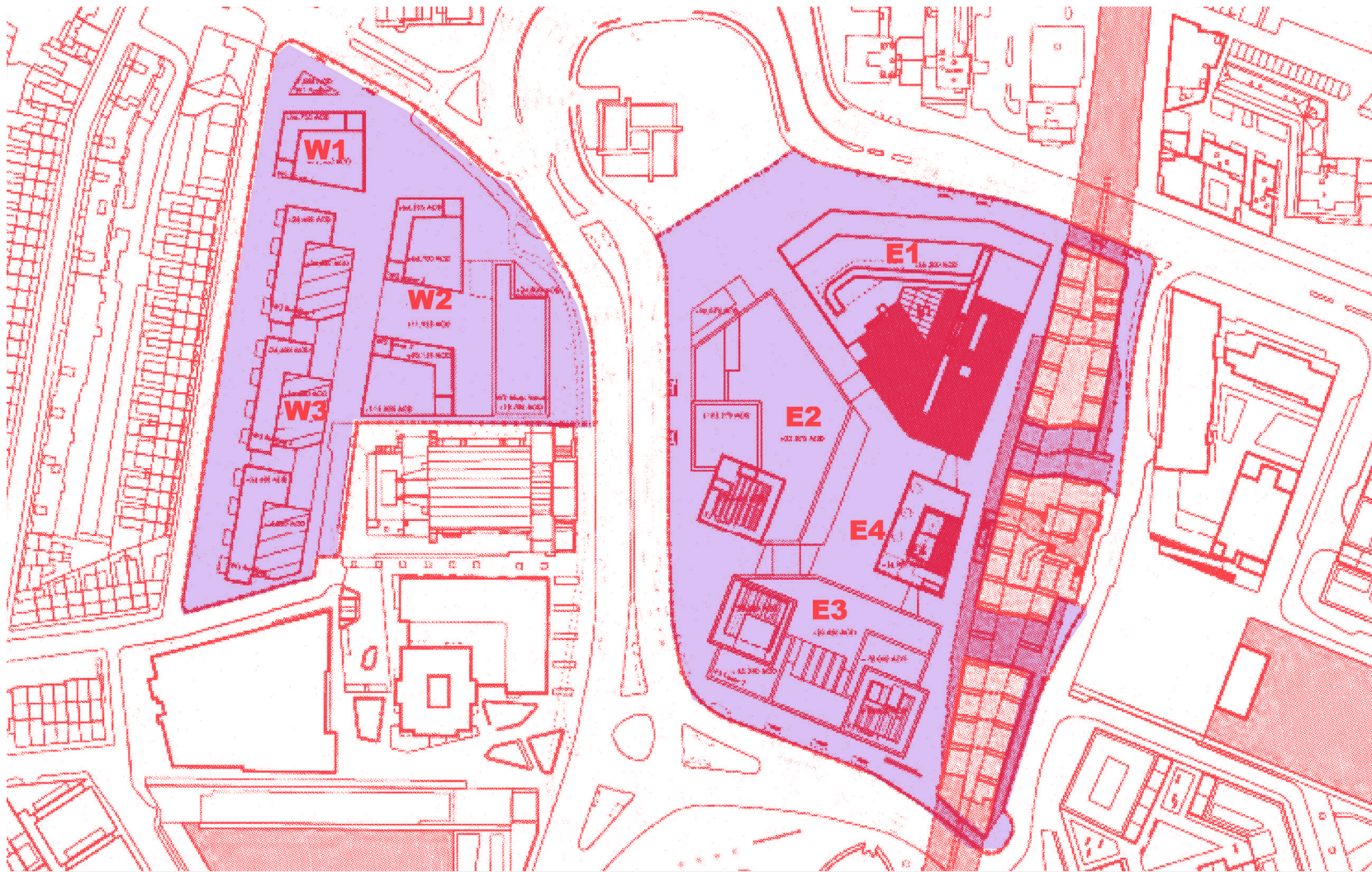
Since then developers Delancey have put forward a 'relocation strategy' for traders. It includes a database of alternative premises, an independent business advisor, some local affordable retail units and a relocation fund. This relocation strategy has to be agreed between Southwark and Delancey before the planning application can be approved.

However, the traders are still concerned. The relocation strategy is vague. It is not clear that all businesses would be eligible for support and there are not enough affordable units.

Traders were also concerned that the relocation fund should not be distributed at Delancey's discretion.

The traders' deputation also asked that the relocation strategy include measures to maintain the centre, to make it an attractive environment during any redevelopment and for caps on rents and service charges, to reflect the trading environment and as an incentive for businesses to remain. None of this has been included in the strategy.

The Council told the deputation that it would work with the traders on the relocation strategy. It must do this now and Delancey must not be given planning permission until the traders' needs are met.



## NEW BUILDINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

A map of the proposed sites for the new developments.

**First plot (W1)**  
20 storeys  
Retail and commercial workspace  
Residential tower  
Retail pavilion

**Second plot (W2)**  
3, 24 and 35 storeys  
Retail and leisure  
Two residential towers  
Music venue

**Third plot (W3)**  
8 storeys  
A mansion block of 3 residential buildings  
Retail use at ground and upper floors  
Workspace and retail along pedestrianised Pastor Street

**First plot (E1)**  
12 storeys  
UAL:LCC facility  
Retail and commercial workspace  
New Northern Line entrance

**Second plot (E2)**  
3 and 32 storeys  
A retail and leisure building with a 32 storey residential tower  
Multi-Screen Cinema

**Third plot (E3)**  
2, 21 and 23 storeys  
A retail and leisure building with two residential towers of 21 and 23 storeys

**Fourth plot (E4)**  
4 floors  
A retail and leisure building  
New openings through two railway arches and use of one arch for retail and leisure  
LCC site – new buildings and developments

## DEVELOPMENT TIMETABLE

09/2019 - 10/2024

Demolition and construction on shopping centre site

06/2023 - 09/2027

Demolition and construction on LCC site

Artist's impression to the right



# IF THE BUSINESSES GO, THEN THE PEOPLE WILL GO

## BUSINESS READINESS PROGRAM FOR MEBs

The regeneration process in the area of Elephant and Castle is surrounded by increasing uncertainty. Traders, clients, neighbours...no one knows how the process is going to unfold. In light of the uncertainties all members of the Elephant community are going through, the charity Latin Elephant is launching a new Migrant and Ethnic Business Readiness Programme to support all small migrant and ethnic businesses (MEBs) affected by the regeneration of Elephant & Castle (E&C).

The programme, entirely free for traders and their employees, will start at the end of this summer.

It will be open to all migrant and ethnic traders whose businesses are in the E&C regeneration area and whose trading activities contribute to the local economy and the identity of E&C as a vibrant and multicultural place.

This programme, funded by the charity United St Saviour's, aims to improve access to business support services and to facilitate dialogue between decision makers and the existing community to prepare them for the planned changes. This will be achieved via workshops, referral mechanisms, a mentoring scheme and the elaboration of guides to promote awareness of responsible working and business practices, information about commercial property law and accessing finance.

Latin Elephant will reach out to micro-MEBs in the commercial area of E&C to improve business practices, prepare traders for changes associated with the regeneration and foster engagement with other local organisations. Minimising the risk of displacement of MEBs around

“ THIS IS A VITAL PROJECT FOR EVERYONE IN THE AREA ”

Elephant and Castle is a priority. This can be achieved by equipping traders with the necessary skills to bid for affordable commercial spaces available in the new developments, improve business practices, and develop skills to improve resilience in the current context. This is a vital project for everyone in the area as it will strengthen and revitalise the small business

community whilst minimising negative impacts associated with urban change on businesses and the local people who they assist. MEBs are an integral part of the communities of E&C, many of whom are already affected by the regeneration.

These shops provide goods at reasonable prices, services in specific languages, and most importantly these are information centres and meeting points for the local population. MEBs are part of the social fabric of E&C, community assets and part of a support network. This informal sector of the local economy is crucial to the livelihoods and resilience of the local population. As one resident pointed out: “If the businesses go, then the people will go as well”. Commercial displacement can lead to more isolation of the local community. “This is a timely project that we hope provides businesses time to think through alternatives open to them and prepare in a timely manner for the changes to come,” said founder and director of Latin Elephant Patria Román.

“The migrant and ethnic business readiness programme is unique in that it targets business communities who often face barriers to access financial and legal services under context of regeneration. We hope that the programme strengthens the position of traders from an ethnic and migrant background.” Latin Elephant is a registered charity that promotes participation, engagement and inclusion of migrant and ethnic groups in processes of urban change in London. In the past years the organisation has been responding to urban policy frameworks supporting migrant and ethnic economies in London; supporting existing migrant and ethnic businesses in the context of broader processes of regeneration, and has been increasing inclusion, engagement of the wider community in participatory activities.

For further information on the programme and how to get involved, please write to: [info@latinelephant.org](mailto:info@latinelephant.org).



## PLANNING APPLICATION

### SHOPPING CENTRE AND LONDON COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

The shopping centre is owned by property developer Delancey. It is in a partnership with APG, a Dutch Pension Fund and Qatari Diar Real estate.

A planning application has been made by Delancey to, demolish all existing buildings on the side of the shopping centre and the London College of Communication (LCC). It will build new shops, cafes, restaurants, bars, cinema, music venue, homes, offices, education premises, leisure facilities, Northern Line tube entrance, with new public spaces, parking and service areas.

### WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR

*Will there be shops for local traders?*

There will be a modest increase in the amount of retail floor space. Delancey will not be letting any shops at below market rents. There will be no shops to let at affordable rent.

*Will there be new homes for local people?*

There will be 979 new flats. Delancey say that 35% of these will be affordable, but there will be no social rented housing or affordable housing for sale. It will all be rented, at up to 80% market rent, at an average of 57% market rent. The tenancies will be for 3 years. It may only be affordable housing for 15 years. It will be privately owned and run.

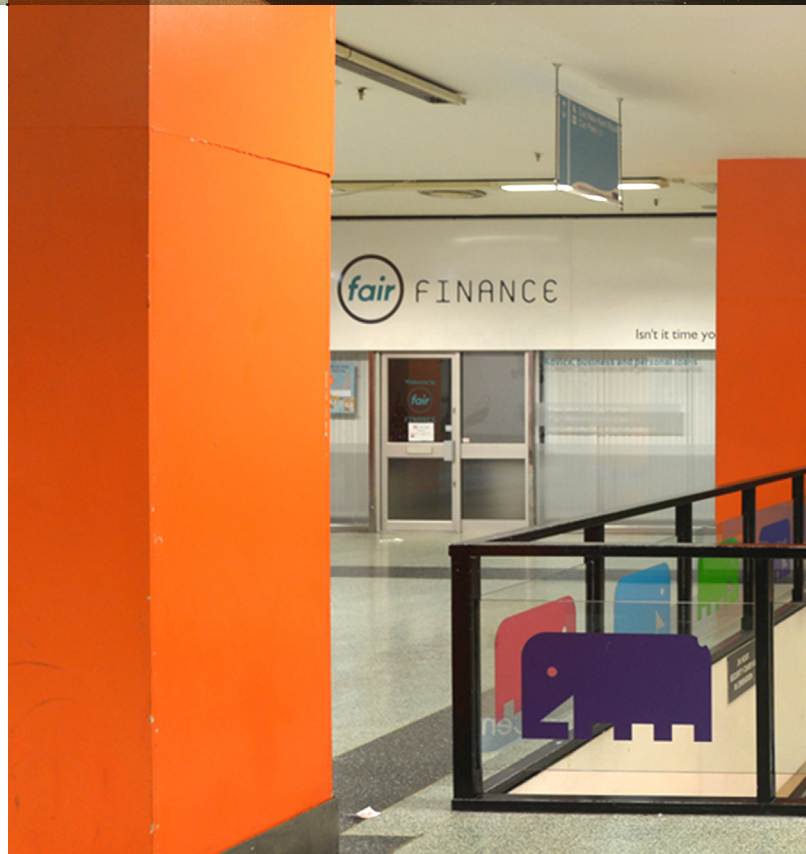
*Where can the shopping centre traders go?*

Delancey and Southwark Council have no plans to help traders relocate. Delancey say that it will only help if it is granted planning permission.

Southwark Council has a duty to ensure that no part of the community suffers ‘disproportionately’ from any new development. Before it gives Delancey planning permission it must ensure that Delancey:

- Provides 10% affordable retail space.
- Draws up a relocation strategy for traders.
- Provides 35% genuinely affordable housing, half at social rents.

We must make our voices heard: the first thing to do is object. [www.35percent.org/shopping-centre](http://www.35percent.org/shopping-centre)



# CAMBIARSE Y ADAPTAR PARA CONTINUAR EN ELEPHANT

## LA CLAVE DE UN COMERCIANTE EXITOSO

*Mario López es quizás el comerciante del área de Elephant & Castle que mejor comprenda la regeneración urbana. Con más de 20 años de experiencia en la industria gastronómica, Mario conoce como pocos los secretos de cómo manejar un negocio, expandir la base de clientes y, sobre todo, qué condiciones hay que cumplir para aplicar a nuevas unidades y adaptarse a los cambios para permanecer en el área.*

Fue el artífice de la exitosa aplicación para conseguir un nuevo local para La Bodeguita, el más tradicional de los restaurantes latinoamericanos de Elephant. A finales de 2016 inició los trámites y papeleos para conseguir una unidad comercial en Walworth Road, y el 6 de enero de 2016 abrió sus puertas con el nombre de Latin Bites. “La Bodeguita ya es conocida por toda la comunidad y los vecinos porque hace casi 20 años que está en Elephant ofreciendo platos de Colombia,”

explica Mario. “Pero el nuevo local de Latin Bites incorpora comida de toda la región latina para que podamos tener street food, desde México a las Pampas.”

El desafío, señala Mario, es el de “educar” al cliente a que pruebe nuevos platos. “Tenemos que enseñarle a la gente que hay más que la arepa.”

Luego cita el caso de algunos británicos que se han familiarizado con las empanadas. “Con La Bodeguita kiosko la gente empezó a conocer la empanada. Por ejemplo, los ingleses que están acostumbrados a comer un sándwich de paso ahora probaron una papa rellena por £2,50 y un agua panela de £1, y por £3,50 tienen algo que les gusta más que el clásico sándwich.”

“Este proceso toma mucho tiempo, hay que ‘educar’ a los clientes que no son latinos a que se acerquen a nuestros locales”, añade.

El kiosko -ubicado junto a la parada de autobús fuera de la entrada

principal al centro comercial de Elephant- fue el tercer local que la familia dueña de la Bodeguita abrió, luego del café Bodeguita -uno de los primeros comercios de origen latinoamericano, abierto en 1994- y del tradicional restaurante del mismo nombre.

Actualmente, Mario maneja la contabilidad de cuatro locales comerciales de La Bodeguita. Pero su historia comenzó hace muchos años. Llegó de Colombia a Londres con apenas 12 años, completó la escuela secundaria y comenzó a trabajar en una tienda de alimentos naturales.

Luego hizo una licenciatura en Fisiología y Bioquímica en Kings College London y años después completó su maestría en Business Development Management en Westminster University.

“Allí aprendí mucho sobre cómo manejar un negocio y armarlo

desde cero”, dice Mario. Su vinculación con la comunidad de Elephant llegó hacia el año 2000, cuando escribía una columna de alimentación en una revista latinoamericana editada en Londres. Luego se conectó con Distriandina para distribuir productos naturales y tomó contacto con varios comerciantes. Unos años después La Chatica lo contrató para hacer el business management del local que abrieron en uno de los arcos del centro comercial, en Elephant Road. “Tuvimos que montarlo desde cero, entonces allí empecé a familiarizarme más con contratos, regulaciones, cuentas de luz y gas, ‘health and safety’, etc.”

Tras organizar la apertura de La Chatica volvió a trabajar para Distriandina y desde hace unos cinco años lo hace con La Bodeguita. “Toda esta experiencia

acumulada fue clave para poder abrir Latin Bites”, dice. Pero, según advierte, lleva tiempo consolidar un negocio nuevo.

“También nos tocó empezar de cero. Tomó seis meses para atraer clientes y que conozcan nuestro local. Hay que tener mucha paciencia, organización y sobre todo solidez financiera”.

Estas condiciones son esenciales para que los comerciantes puedan aplicar a nuevas unidades comerciales en el futuro. Según Mario, “hay que poder comprobar un récord impositivo, presentar extractos bancarios, referencias de proveedores y un buen business plan”.

¿Qué piensa de la regeneración?: “El cambio es inevitable: o cambias o te quedas atrás.”

Y cierra el diálogo con un consejo: “Es necesario cambiar el ‘mindset’ para adaptarse y permanecer.”



# ADAPT AND CHANGE IN ORDER TO REMAIN AT THE ELEPHANT

## THE ADVICE OF A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN

*Mario Lopez is probably the best businessman to understand urban regeneration. With over twenty years of experience in the gastronomic industry, Mario knows the key to managing growing businesses as well as how to access new units in the area. Over the years he has learn to make innovative changes in order to remain in the area.*

Mario has successfully applied for a unit in the new commercial development for La Bodeguita, the most traditional Latin American restaurant in the Elephant. At the end of 2016 he also set up Latin Bites, a new unit on Walworth Road. While La Bodeguita is well known across the community, even the whole city, for its Colombian food, Latin Bites offers street food

from the whole of Latin America – from Mexico to the Pampas.

“The trick is educating clients to try the new dishes,” he explains. “We have to educate people beyond arepas.” He goes on to tell us about English customers who are now used to empanadas, due to the opening of La Bodeguita Kiosk; “instead of a simple sandwich they can get a jacket potato for £2.50, and panela water for 1 pounds. For a total £3.50 they get a better deal than a simple sandwich.” However, educating customers takes time, “especially with non-Latin clients”, Mario adds. The kiosk, located by the bus stops at the front of the shopping centre, was the third unit opened by La Bodeguita owners since the original restaurant

opened back in 1994. Nowadays Mario runs four premises. He arrived to London as a twelve-year old and his first job was in an organic shop after secondary school. He went on to study a BA in Physiology and Biochemistry at King’s College London, to follow with an MA in Business Development and Management at Westminster University. “I learnt loads, not only about running a business but also how to develop it from scratch” says Mario. His link to the Elephant & Castle community began in 2000 when wrote a column in a Latin food magazine, edited in London. He gradually got to

know businesses and traders in the area, like Distriandina, known for distributing natural products. Later he was hired by La Chatica, running their business on Elephant Road: “We started from nothing and had to learn about contracts, bills and health and safety laws along the way.” Afterwards, he went back to Distriandina before moving to La Bodeguita, where he’s been for the past five years.

Due to his previous experience Mario feels strong enough to open and run Latin Bites, although he recognises it takes time to consolidate a business of this kind: “It took six months to attract new

customers. You need to be patient, well-organised and above all to have a strong financial position. These are requisites to have access to new units.” According to Mario, you need to prove you are economically solvent, able to show bank statements and good references as well as to have a positive and sound business plan. With regards to the regeneration at Elephant & Castle,

Mario is pragmatic: “Change is inevitable: You need to change or your time will pass. You need to change the mindset in order to adapt and remain.”

# MEAT N MEAT

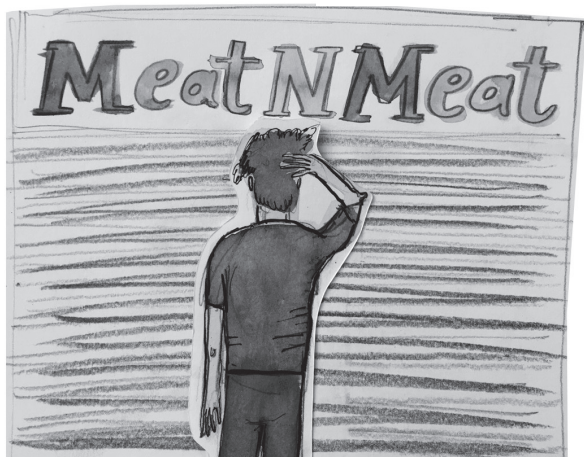
Meat N Meat (A Grocery Shop in Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre (Ground Floor) that's been going for many years) Lease expired recently. The owner gave his notice to say he didn't want to renew the lease. An employee of his saw a brilliant opportunity...



The employee, we'll call him 'Jai', wanted to take on the business, well, the space, and buy the fridges etc, and carry on the grocery store. He applied to renew the lease.



Hello! I sent you all the correct docs - references and everything.  
 - yes, we got all the documents. So can I sign the lease? I'd like to start business ASAP!  
 - but the current tenant needs to get out. Fridges and everything.  
 - oh, but I will use the fridges, I will use those shelves for my stock. For my grocery store.  
 - 2 weeks to get out EVERYTHING. Then we'll negotiate.



Outside - the fridges, everything - ruined. Ripped from the shop and left to waste.

It was gone.  
 It was all gone.  
 His job.  
 His routine.  
 His chance to make his own way.  
 Gone.



## JENNY'S CAFE

THIS CAFE'S A CLASSIC

Catching Ali, the manager of Jenny's Burgers, for a chat between orders is tricky. Customers stopping in at a steady flow keeping him busy at the grills. "I've been here twenty-three years," he tells me while dropping my hash browns into the fryer. Jenny's is a classic Elephant & Castle establishment with tables lining the walls and lunchtime customers watching the day go by before returning to work.

The first floor café may not be as busy as it once was, but his classic breakfasts haven't changed a bit. Tucking into an omelette, beans and hash browns is a trip down memory lane, where breakfasts fill you up and don't break the bank.

Amidst the hubbub of the Elephant outside and the busy ground floor of the shopping centre downstairs, Jenny's is a place of calm. It's somewhere to collect your thoughts over a hearty meal. Menus line the walls displaying a huge range of options from lamb liver to veggie breakfasts, all with the offer of fresh toasted bread. Ali remembers when business was booming "we used to have seven people working here but now it's just the two of us. I work non-stop, from seven in the morning until ten at night." His work doesn't go unnoticed, customers from all walks of life stroll on through: nattering ladies, students and Cypriot old timers occupy the green seats of Jenny's - they know which way their bread is buttered.

WHERE BREAKFASTS FILL YOU UP AND DON'T BREAK THE BANK

## Jenny's Cafe MENU

### BREAKFAST

**HASH BROWN & OMELETTE**  
 £3.80

Cheese omelette, Served with beans, two hash browns and a slice of tomato.

**NEW EARLY STARTER**  
 £3.80

Scrambled eggs, two slices of toast, tomato, a rasher of bacon, beans and two hash browns.

**TRADITIONAL BREAKFAST**  
 £4.00

A grilled egg, sausage two rashers of bacon, beans and chips.

**THE BRUNCH BREAKFAST**  
 £4.50

Two grilled eggs, two sausages, two rashers of bacon, sliced tomato and mushrooms.

**MEGA MIXED GRILL**  
 £5.50

Two grilled eggs, two sausages, a beef burger, a rasher of bacon, two sliced tomatoes, golden onion rings and chips.

**TOAST**  
 £1.40

Slices of hot buttered toast, White/brown served with a portion of jam.

**OLYMPIC BREAKFAST**  
 £4.50

Two grilled eggs, three sausages, sliced tomato, beans and mushrooms.

### BURGERS

All burgers can come with chips for an extra £1.20

**JJ SPECIAL**  
 £2.50

A tender smoked frankfurter, beef burger, sliced cheese, tomato and crispy lettuce.

**HBB SPECIAL**  
 £2.80

The Mighty Has Brown Burger  
 A great tasting hash brown, crispy salad, succulent chicken burger.

**KING-SIZE**  
 £2.50

Two beef burgers, crispy lettuce, sliced tomato, sliced cheese and tomato sauce.

**BACON 'N' EGG IN A BUN**  
 £2.00

A rasher of bacon fried just the way you like it, topped with a grilled egg.

**BACON CHEESE BURGER**  
 £2.10

**QUATER-POUNDER**  
 £2.20

**CHEESE BURGER**  
 £1.30

**HAMBURGER**  
 £1.10

**VEGETABLE BURGER**  
 £2.30

**HALF-POUNDER**  
 £3.80

**CHICKEN BURGER IN A BUN**  
 £2.30

**FISH FILLET IN A BUN**  
 £2.30

**SPICY BEAN BURGER**  
 £2.30

**BACON, CHEESE 'N' EGG BURGER**  
 £2.80

Many more available at Jenny's burgers.

### SPECIALS

**SET 1**  
 £4.50

2 Eggs, 2 bacon, sausage, beans or tomato, 2 bread or 2 toast, plus tea or coffee.

**SET 2**  
 £4.20

2 Eggs, 2 sausage, beans or tomato, 2 bread or 2 toast, plus tea or coffee.

**SET 3 - VEGETARIAN BREAKFAST**  
 £4.80

2 Eggs, 2 veg sausages, beans or tomato, 2 bread or 2 toast, plus tea or coffee.

# THE THING THAT DISAPPOINTS ME THE MOST IN ALL THIS HAS BEEN THE WAY THEY'VE TREATED TRADERS.

EMAD MEGAHED

*Printers, internet and the warmest smile in town, Emad is something of a figurehead for the community at the shopping centre. He told The Elephant's Trumpet his story.*

I'd always been interested in setting up my own business. Before I had the shop here, I always believed that I was selling my skills and time for somebody else, rather than investing my skills and time for myself. Before I came here I never knew what I could do if I invested my own skills and time for myself.

My background is in IT support. After I graduated from North London University (now London Metropolitan University) I got a job in a college in Hackney, I was there for seven years, and then took a job as a data manager at a secondary school in Tower Hamlets. At this time I opened up a side-line in a shop in Hackney. I took a small section of an internet cafe and would do computer repairs after work and on weekends. One day in 2009, a friend of mine suggested we look at Elephant & Castle as a place to set up our own place. We came down to have a look and the shops were cheap at the time, so after doing a bit of research we decided to take it.

To be honest you I didn't think much of the place when we first arrived. I thought it was a really sort of run down shopping centre, not the place where I would go to do shopping. But my love for the centre grew over time. I discovered that there was an inner beauty to the place, more than in the exterior of it. Yes, the exterior of it looks ugly, but there is really something special to the inside; the spirit of the community and the spirit of the traders working together.

At first, business was difficult. We tried to run before we could walk by taking this large unit. Quite quickly the overheads were growing faster than the income and then there was an accumulation of rent arrears. One day the bailiffs turned up and said, "right, we're

taking walk-in possession of your stock until you can pay the rent in arrears". They gave us two weeks to raise £8000 and there was no way we could do it. I received letters from the head office to say that they're winding the company down and there was a court date in the high court. All my friends told me to just walk away. But my spirit of fighting somehow told me not to. I went to the court date and spoke to the credit controller at St Modwen (former owners of the shopping centre). I took her aside and said, "listen, just put everything on hold for 6 months, if you can, and I'll pay your money back". She was a brilliant credit controller and she agreed to help. She postponed the judgement for another six months and I started getting a bit of cash flowing again by working at markets at the weekends. Later she let me work back in the unit at the shopping centre to put me in a better position to pay her back.

When I opened the shop again people started to come back and I started to build a business again. That took about a year and a half, up to 2011. At this point I formalised the business into a limited company, although I didn't have a lease. All the time we were hearing that the centre was going to be demolished so there was no point in getting a lease. Then one day in 2013 we heard that the centre had been sold to another developer and there is this new agent, Savills.

**"YES, THE EXTERIOR OF IT LOOKS UGLY, BUT THERE IS REALLY SOMETHING SPECIAL TO THE INSIDE"**

This is when things started to go from good to bad. First, they closed all the subways outside the

shopping centre and renovated the part outside the Northern Line entrance. At the same time, they started formalising leases with us and the rent started to go up. Before I was paying £20,000 and now I'm paying over £35,000, plus £5,000 of business rates to the council, so it's about £40,000 per year.

When it comes to the business, I'm the technician, the cleaner, the manager, the accountant, everything. So you can imagine the amount of time I need to do all that, and then to add this task of negotiating with the management on top – it means we are basically powerless as individuals. There was no choice but to take the increase.

The thing that disappoints me the most in all this has been the way they've treated traders. They think we aren't intelligent human beings, that we're stupid and that whatever they say to us that we're going to accept it. They didn't expect us to come back to them and respond in the way we responded. We feel a bit gutted at the fact that we made the place a bit more vibrant for them and now somebody who's got money and power can just come and say, "You know what, you're out. You're not going to fit in the wider picture. We don't want your sort here." That's basically what they're trying to say.

They neglect the outside of the building, making it look really run down. They closed all the subways, escalators are forever breaking down. They always say, "Oh, it's a really costly part". But we didn't have this problem before when St Modwen's was running it. It's always been working, so why all of a sudden has the centre started to suffer?

But you can't really confront them on this. They use a very tactful business strategy which is dividing responsibility to different companies so we never know who to speak to, or who's responsible for what. It's putting a lot of pressure on business owners. It's that idea of divide and rule. Divide people and





## WHEN WE FIRST ARRIVED IT FELT LIKE HOME

MUHAMMAD ZAHID

**M**y name is Muhammad and I've been a trader at the centre with my brother Jamal since about 2000, 2001. Initially we started as market traders and slowly we got a shop inside the shopping centre. We built that up and eventually got two other units, so we have three in total. In one of them we were doing mobiles and repairs, in the other ones we were doing computers and repairs and the third is for handbags and luggage. It's quite varied!

In the beginning everything was running OK and the management was very happy. If there was a problem we used to come upstairs and the management would deal with it. That was when Mike Knell was the centre manager. Since it changed to Savills, if there's a problem, we go to the office and they just don't want to know. All they do is give you a card and say email this or that person. When you email that person they put you through to some other person. We don't know who we're dealing with. When they do deal with us it isn't nice. We had a situation with our lease recently. One of our leases was finishing on 22nd May and I wanted to do a deal with them to keep it going. Because the flow is not as it used to be, business isn't as it was. So I just wanted to tell them that if they can reduce the rent maybe we can renew the lease. But I ended up giving up that lease, just last month, the computers and repairs shop.

I had spoken to them previously about changing units but they always said that there wasn't any space. I never really believed them but I did accept it. But now that my lease has ended, I asked if I could move one of my shops into that unit that I just gave up and they said no. I know it's available because it was mine! They said it's a separate lease so they can't just transfer it. It's not nice really, I've been a good tenant here for a long time and I just wanted to move my business into a better position, near Tesco. The rent, service charge and everything is the same. They just don't want to do it. I've told them I

don't mind what kind of lease they give me – short term, two year, I don't mind, but they won't do it. On top of this they've started increasing the service charges as well. In the last year and a half we are getting extra bills every two or three quarters. We get a bill for £1000 and ask 'what is this?'; 'Oh, this is the service charge, we've spent extra in the last year,' they say. And there's nothing you can do about it. Now we are just making money and giving it to them.

It's worse now the flow is messed up as well. Since they closed the subways it's had a big effect on the shops. When we started outside it was a very busy place and the management worked well. The manager was Mark, a Jamaican guy. If anything broke it would get fixed the same day. Here now if the escalator breaks down, it's broken for a month, two months, nobody cares. The toilets downstairs, I'm telling you, you can't go into them! They just stink, it's embarrassing.

It's a shame, because when we first arrived it felt like home. I had just come to the UK from Afghanistan then, but it felt like home. It was just a place that you wanted to work in, it was enjoyable. I remember there used to be a guy called Roy just in front of the main gate selling CDs. He used to make all these funny noises, just outside Santander, for a good 12, 13 years. He's just disappeared because he had some problems with his legs. So he just left. Then every afternoon there were the guys playing dominoes by the Jamaican food. Even I used to play with them sometimes!

Now we're saying that if we can manage to find a place somewhere else we'll probably just move. But we actually can't because we've got a lease and the management won't take it back until November 2018. If we did leave we'd ideally go somewhere local because we've built a good customer base here. One reason we're hanging on is that they might relocate us into the new units in Elephant One, I think that's what they've called it. So there's one hope.

# UNEARTHING ELEPHANT

Unearthing Elephant is a film created by artists Eva Sajovic, Rebecca Davies and writer Sarah Butler, which aims to document, celebrate and advocate for the unique space that is Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. Written and filmed throughout 2014-2017, the film weaves the imagined voice of the Shopping Centre itself together with the voices and opinions of traders, customers, local residents and academics.

Below is a selection of voices from the film. We will be featuring other extracts in future editions of the newspaper.

## LUZ, LUCY'S SALON

My name is Luz, but everybody calls me Lucy, because that is the name of the salon. I am here for about 25 years. And for me, was my life, and my future. Not now. I was the first Latin American hairdresser. Was me in the community.

Especially in here. Before me, was another lady in Inara travel, then me, then La Bodeguita, then more shops coming together. That's how started Latin American community in this Centre. I'm talking about maybe 30 years ago. But now I feel sad, really.

But everybody tries to be together. That is what I want - all Latin American be together. That is the advice - the solicitors and everything. We tried many times to get people to help us, but at the moment we don't know. We are in the limbo. We don't know what's going on.

I expect the landlord to do something for us. Especially me, or the people who stay here for more than 20 years. It's not easy for me to find another place to work - that is one thing. The other thing is, I really love to be here. And I think I'm going to be retired here. And now what?

The Latin Americans help me a lot. That was my support all these years. And the English people were so cool with me. And that is what I'm going to miss. I really want they do something for the people who stay here too long. Or recognise something. That is what I think.

## VICTORIA, CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP

My name is Victoria, and I manage this little Christian Bookshop called The Word Among Us. A Christian supermarket where you can get everything you need for your daily Christian life.

Being in Elephant has really given me more encouragement to want to continue with this business. When they told us they were going to close this place, I have been on the lookout for another premises in Elephant, because it's centralised. You got access to transport - Underground, train, buses, I want to say millions passes through Elephant and Castle. It's

a community area where you find different types of minorities. I've got Latin American stuff in my shop. They come in and they are so friendly. There is no tribe that you're looking for that you don't meet in Elephant and Castle. So it would be a shame if they took this away and didn't replace it, and give it back to the people who hold Elephant and Castle. I don't know what they're doing now. We don't know when we're going to move out of here. We don't even know where we are moving to. Even the new ones now - when you ask for the price for renting, it is very high. So even though I want to stay here, I don't think we'll be able to afford that. If they could put that in their plan: that there are people who have been holding this area, trying

to bring community together business-wise, and then think of bringing them back.

The Elephant is therapy for many people. You see people that each day they must come, whether they are buying anything or not, they come here and walk by. Some of them do come and say hello to me. They are not buying, but they come in. It's like a therapy that acts on people's lives. We must not put that aside. It is not just about buying, it is a community place where you see people of different nationality meet and enjoy themselves, have a good time and go back home or to their place of work.

What will become of them when this place goes down?





**MANAGER MIKE**

I remember when I first became the shopping centre manager back in 2003, friends and family thought I had gone crazy. However, I embarked on an adventure to turn this den of iniquity into a place where people wanted to be. It took around 18 months to see a change. Crime was down by around 90%. It had gone from a police hot spot to a cool spot. The gangs had gone, so too had the drug taking and dealing. Traders were encouraged to talk to each other and let me mediate in any problems that may arise. The community was reborn, shoppers stopping to chat

and being at ease with the new feel to their centre. This wasn't a sole effort, I had managed to build a very good team around me. Training security in many different ways to help keep all within our walls safe. Employing contractor's that became as passionate about keeping the Elephant & Castle standing for as long as we could. Change is inevitable but not always good, I am saddened to think that one day soon my Elephant and Castle will be no more.

Mike Knell narrates Unearthing Elephant. For details of the next screening, please see [PEOPLESBUREAU.CO.UK](http://PEOPLESBUREAU.CO.UK)



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**IT HAD GONE FROM POLICE HOT SPOT TO A COOL SPOT.**

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## HISTORY OF THE ELEPHANT

### A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

The Elephant and Castle shopping centre was completed in 1965 and was the second – it is sometimes mistakenly cited as the first – American-style covered shopping centre to be built in Europe. It was designed for the Willett Group by the architects Boissevain & Osmond and has existed ever since beside one of the busiest traffic junctions in London. The Elephant was completed only five years after the awarding of the commission to Boissevain & Osmond. But the ideals, the architectural visions, and the promise of a new type of shopping experience would straight away encounter problems. On its opening day it was already in a bad state: only 32 out of its 100 shop units were ready to open.

The shopping centre has been maligned throughout much of its existence, with constant threats to its future, but it has persevered and thanks to certain successful interventions has become an important and unique place. It is an example of a building shaped by its users and locality. The Elephant is a kind of anti-shopping centre; despite being built as an archetype it has aged and is (refreshingly) a long way from the gleaming shopping

centres full of chain stores that we are more familiar with. The Elephant has existed for over half a century and is now the oldest shopping centre of its kind in Europe following the demolition of the original Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham in 2000. This shopping centre was built based on an American model, which was meant to be in the suburbs. It meant to be where you drive to into a carpark on the ground level. On a traffic island almost, surrounded by traffic.

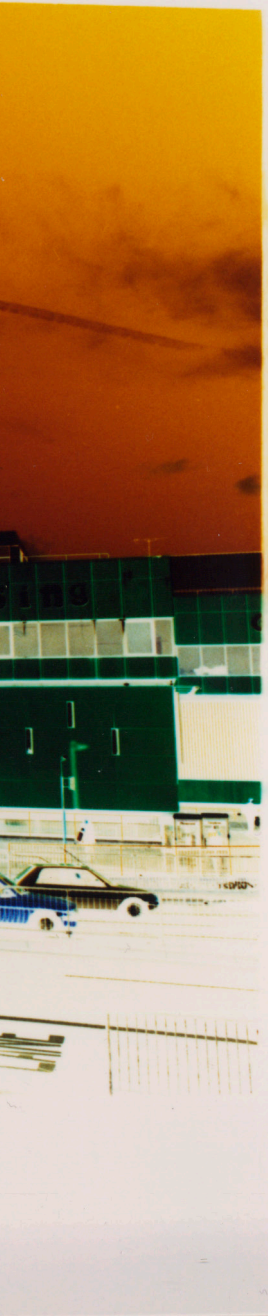
‘Wonderful piece of design, originally the top could open. It had a hard top opening so that the central section on the upper shopping level could open so that you could see the sky.’ (Eric Reynolds, Founding Director of Urban Space Management)  
 ‘They opened up the roof. The mayor was there. Everybody was there, making speeches, and that. I think it was the first covered shopping centre in London. They opened it up specially. But eventually they gave it up.’ (Helen O’ Brien, Local resident and activist)

‘After 25 years the first person who actually understood how to make it into something successful was Eric Reynolds. He came and

made it into what it is today. The first thing he did, he painted the whole building pink, to make it stick out.’ (Jose da Silva, writer)

‘Before then it was sludge green and invisible. And I always thought that it was rather like Cadillac. Long and flat. And it’s not bubble gum pink. It’s schiapparelli pink. We just told people what’s inside. Because our view was that thousands. Literally thousands of people passed on buses and had no idea, really, of what was inside. So we thought, we just take it to the outside. We introduced Jamaican bank, then we brought in South American cafes and we started the market. All of which worked, so we did fill the place.’ (Eric Reynolds, Founding Director of Urban Space Management)

‘Most of the developers simply saw it as just a hole in the ground and hadn’t realised just how complex it is. Because it connects to underground, overground, it has a structure that is integrated with the railway network. All sorts of good reasons to try and work with it, not against it. And the Elephant has hung on for years longer. I mean they thought back in 1985 that it would disappear. And it’s still there.’ (Eric)



# A PLACE WHERE WORLDS COLLIDE

JOHN REED, A RESIDENT OF BERMONDSEY AND A REGULAR SHOPPING CENTRE VISITOR SPEAKS TO STRANGERS ON A RECENT VISIT.

I managed to talk to two people at the shopping centre before I went bowling yesterday. The first, Alan, I met hanging around at the top of the walkway by the pink Elephant. He was waiting for someone. He was a white guy with a beard and a bike with a London accent, probably about 30. He knew the shopping centre was due for demolition but felt there was nothing wrong with it. He said he didn't exactly frequent the place, but he came there every so often and had links to the local area. He said he taught Latinos and they came to the shopping centre every weekend. He said that Southwark Council were 'bent' where development was concerned, he'd been involved in the Heygate Estate because a friend lived there and felt it was all rigged in favour of developers. He said that the 'problem' with the shopping centre, as far as the Council were concerned, was probably that it wasn't 'luxury flats'. He liked the 'diversity' of the shopping centre. As to 'improvements' to the place, he thought it could use a lick of paint. Then he had to go, because his sister arrived.

I met my second acquaintance, Steve, sitting on a bench downstairs. He was a black guy, elderly, who said he came on the bus from near Tower Bridge, like me. He smelt of cigarettes and talked in a slow, hoarse voice. He said he wasn't surprised that the shopping centre was being knocked down as it sounded like it was part of the 'gentrification' of the area. He said it seemed like the 'development' that the Council undertook no longer had anything to do with making the lives of local people better. It was all just about making money and giving the well-off somewhere to live and play. He said that more luxury flats and entertainment wouldn't make his or anyone else's lives better. There was a time, he said, when you

could get everything you needed in the shopping centre, but it wasn't like that any more. He would have the ground floor dedicated to retail of different kinds, and then travel agents and such like upstairs.

He felt that he was now just a kind of commodity as far as the Council were concerned, and that everything had turned into a business, including the council. He felt there was no community left anymore, which there had been some years ago. He said his neighbours in his block near Tower Bridge were entirely suspicious of him even if he just tried to say hello. It was a decent place to live if you were passing through, but not

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BUT I FELT I SHOULD HEAD ON TOWARDS THE CULTURAL SHOPPING CENTRE OF DREAMS

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if you wanted to stay and make it your home. In the past there had been a community where people knew each other. He felt the shopping centre was the same, he said that even 15 years ago people knew each other and looked out for each other, but not any more. He said he didn't really talk to anyone at the shopping centre, which he came to every so often. It wasn't a social space for him. Later I went bowling with my uncle and aunt, who is Colombian. Her mother and my cousin came too.

I'd already eaten a South American late lunch there: beef, rice, plantain, beans and salad washed down with a Manzana fizzy drink. The whole experience was rather like being in South America, like one of the cheaper malls in Cali where I lived for 6 months a while ago. I'd never been bowling at the SC and quite enjoyed the shabby glamour. I won the bowling, my aunt's 92 year old mother came second as we were using the guard rails and she did a good job of bouncing the ball off them. Then we went to La Bodeguita, the Colombian place on one corner of the centre, and had a meal of pork chops with rice and beer. And we danced a bit of Salsa and Merengue. My

balcony walkway, or by the stairs, or on a bench, or just hanging out watching the world go by. And large empty spaces. A place of foreigners, local foreigners. And little worlds, each shop a little world unto itself. And not exactly an easy place to talk to people. Everyone on their way somewhere; no particular centre to it. But then, as Steve said, who talks to strangers these days? Alan had even commented to his sister 'I'm talking to a stranger!' With that sense of the strangeness of it all.

On the way out of La Bodeguita, at about 11pm, we passed a place called Lost Rivers that was open onto the street and said it was all about theatre, music etc. A kind of cultural venue. But it also looked like the kind of place where a beer is a fiver. A middle-class place of entertainment for the "culturally aware". Part of the segregation of the city along lines of class and ethnicity etc. The sort of place I'd belong, and also not belong. And I suppose there was this sense, talking to Alan and Steve, two rather different people, that they both see the oncoming tide of gentrification and its shiny, sanitised realm for the middle class. A place to consume in comfort, but not one that either of them would want to frequent.

But I felt I should head on towards the Cultural Shopping Centre of Dreams... A shopping centre where people from all walks of life, all backgrounds, come and shop, drink, eat, meet, talk but most importantly live. A place where people feel able to talk to one another, and feel able to make art together. Perhaps it is nothing but an absurd dream, but like 'field of dreams' I feel I must build it and she, it, will come.... And then perhaps I shall be released from the shackles of my fantasies of patriarchal capitalism and my bondage to Jabba the Hutt...'





# CENTRE VOICES

## INTERVIEW WITH JANET

How often do I come here? Routine. Every day. Breakfast, the internet, hang about the shopping centre. The internet is probably more my office. People come and ask me if I'd do this and that for them. Today a lady asked me to meet her on Thursday to do some typing for her. The relationship with this building – it is a love affair. Love and hate. I'm very attached to this building... it's like when you spend your day with a partner then you have to leave them. It's a significant thing in your life. You can compare to a person. People find it difficult to understand how it is to have a personal relationship with a building. It really is a relationship with a community.

What will I do when the shopping centre goes and how will it affect my life? Relocation of businesses somewhere local I hope and I will go with them. It will affect my life, it's

“ THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS BUILDING – IT IS A LOVE AFFAIR ”

a routine, structure. This is familiar. You're safe. People know you. To not physically see it is like cutting your arm. Loss to the area, you can't see it anymore. Loss, history, value. For what? Regeneration should be to improve the quality of life of the people from the area. To bring wealth into the area. With the facilities. Instead it is going to ruin people's lives. It's become about millions of pounds and profit.



# CASTLE CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**

- 1. Legs eleven game
- 5. Bienes perdidos
- 7. Columned church nearby
- 9. Metro \_\_\_\_\_ Heights
- 10. Famous local Victorian writer

**DOWN**

- 2. Saint that patronises our circus
- 3. La \_\_\_\_ Café sudamericano
- 4. Solía ser el circulo más grande del elefante
- 6. \_\_\_\_ y castillo
- 8. Aves de metal del cielo



## CREDITS

This newspaper arises out of an ongoing collaboration between local organisations, traders, residents and the artists Eva Sajovic, Sarah Butler and Rebecca Davies. It is produced with the support of Arts Council England, Photofusion and Elephant Amenity Network / 35% Campaign.

The Elephant's Trumpet is a bimonthly newspaper designed to reflect what is going on in and around the Elephant & Castle shopping centre. The content of this paper is created collaboratively and we are always looking for more people to get involved. If you would like to contribute in any way please come to our regular meetings that will be held from September, or email Eva Sajovic:

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