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ELEPHANT AND CASTLE SHOPPING CENTRE

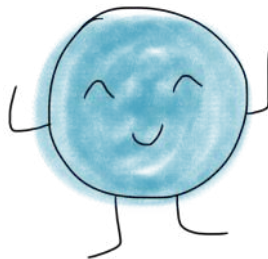
a brief history
+ action guide

This guidebook was produced in collaboration with Latin Elephant and many other community members who contributed their knowledge to this ongoing project. This storytelling project aims to share and honour the history of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre as well as make space for critical conversations around urban change. By preserving memories of our neighbourhoods, we create stronger connections to our communities, our places, and ourselves.

**PLACE
OVER
POWER**

Place Over Power is a community collaborative project using creative storytelling methods to tackle the impacts of gentrification and preserve memories of place.
@placeoverpower

Hi there, I'm Clay and I'm going to share a brief story of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre from my perspective...



about me

A little about me first... I've been building and shaping our cities quite literally from the ground up. London sits on a variety of rock types, some dating up to 145 million years ago!

I'm mostly made up of London Clay, a sea-bed sediment known for being a 'heavy' clay soil. I help make bricks and structurally sound tunnels (you can thank me for helping make the Tube possible).

I've seen a lot of change and development happen over the years...



this is how I look when pulled out of the ground in Elephant and Castle!

a cultural hub



At the time, it was the largest indoor shopping centre in Europe!

The Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre, once located in the middle of South London's busiest junctions, opened in 1965. Within thirty years, it became the main hub for many businesses owned by Latin Americans, migrants and other marginalised communities. The Shopping Centre served as a place for the E&C community to connect, shop, eat, play bingo, and much more.



For many years, the Shopping Centre was a well-loved cultural hub and entrepreneurial place for the local community.



many Latin American businesses in the arches are still thriving in E&C!

Campaigns

In 2018, despite over a thousand formal complaints and community campaigns to halt development of the area, plans were narrowly approved to allow the developer Delancey to demolish the Shopping Centre as part of a major regeneration project.



The Shopping Centre officially closed in 2020, forcing the traders to vacate. Some relocated to temporary locations in Elephant and Castle, but others had to move out of the area or shut down completely.



Images courtesy of Latin Elephant

demolition



Relocation funding was poorly communicated to traders and the temporary locations were set up in areas with low foot traffic, minimal signage, and maintenance issues. Demolition began in 2021 and construction is set to continue with the new town centre estimated to open in early 2026.



Castle Square

Elephant Arcade

Many businesses, mostly migrant-owned, have struggled since moving to Castle Square and Elephant Arcade due to its location and poor building design.

future plans



There will be a new building for the London College of Communication, luxury apartments that will be mostly unaffordable for current residents, and limited retail space (only 10% affordable floor space). This will most likely push out existing residents and traders who will no longer be able to afford to live or work in Elephant and Castle.

stories

These are just a few
of the many stories out
there about E&C...



"[This development] is the same problem because it's the same systems [of oppression and power] to get rid of people." – a community organiser against regeneration and displacement in South London

"I moved from the Shopping Centre four years ago and was told this would be a temporary space for 5 years. [The developers] don't care about us... and I really miss my customers." – a trader who was displaced and relocated after the demolition of the Shopping Centre

"You know what people are doing with this country? They sell off everything. When they sell these places to private people, they build private housing and it's only the rich who can afford to live there." – a former resident of the Heygate Estate (E&C council estate demolished in 2011)

"So the displacement was a quite a lot. People did get things but Castle Square and Elephant Arcade are just not good... Now the Shopping Centre is just a hole in the ground." – an organiser from Up the Elephant

actions

1 **Support local, independent businesses**

Many displaced traders are located in Elephant Arcade and Castle Square. Head there for your next meal or shopping trip!

2 **Learn more Elephant and Castle history**

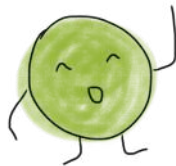
This was a good start, but there's more. You can find a list of additional reading and resources at the end of this guidebook.

3 **Speak up**

Demand change and hold those in power accountable to their promises, including: Southwark Council, developers (Delancey), and partner institutions (UAL)

4 **Share your story**

Help preserve memories within Elephant and Castle by sharing your stories with the local community!



my story

If you have a story to share about Elephant & Castle, you can write/draw it here or email to us!



love the elephant

While the future is uncertain for many Elephant and Castle residents and traders, there continues to be important work happening throughout the community.

Latin Elephant and other community groups are holding the developers and Southwark Council accountable to their promises, providing support for displaced traders, and making sure that memories and stories of the Shopping Centre will live on.



resources

35percent.org/shoppingcentre

latinelephant.org/walkingtheelephant

southwarknotes.wordpress.com/latin-american-elephant

myelephantstory.latinelephant.org

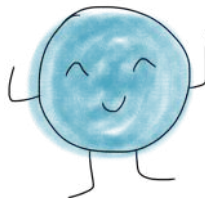
London Latin's Quarter, Latin Elephant (YouTube)

southwark.gov.uk/regeneration/elephant-and-castle

elephantandcastletowncentre.co.uk/looking-to-the-future

elephantandcastle.org.uk/overview-of-the-plans/

runnymedetrust.org/publications/pushed-to-the-margins



Thanks for reading! Let's keep working to reclaim, shape, and build our cities with and for the community.

This guidebook was written and created in collaboration with Latin Elephant.



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