

Tuesday 22 April 2014

# Design of Broadwater Farm Estate criticised at Old Bailey

10 March 2014 | By [Elizabeth Hopkirk](#)

Aerial walkways made policing impossible, murder trial told

The design of the Broadwater Farm Estate in north London has been criticised during the trial of a man accused of murdering PC Keith Blakelock.

The policeman was hacked to death during the first Tottenham riots in October 1985.

The Old Bailey murder trial of Nicky Jacobs, 45, heard last week that the estate was “impossible to police” by Chief Superintendent Colin Couch, the highest-ranking officer on the scene at the time.

The court heard that Broadwater Farm was on a list that former Scotland Yard commissioner Kenneth Newman had created a list of symbolic areas” police needed to keep an eye on.

Couch said the estate was on the list because anyone could cross it from one side to another without descending to street level, making it “impossible to police”.

The 8.2ha estate was designed by Haringey Borough Architects’ Department and construction using pre-cast concrete panels began in 1967.

When it was completed it contained 1,063 flats, housing up to 4,000 people in a number of slab and point blocks linked by above-ground walkways.

There were no flats at ground level because of the site’s high water table.

But by 1976 the then Department of Environment concluded that it should be demolished because of its poor condition, significant social problems and design faults.

Alice Coleman’s Utopia on Trial was published in 1985 and although she did not specifically mention Broadwater Farm, other commentators highlighted the pertinence of her criticisms of the design of high-density post-war estates.

Blakelock was part of a team of officers sent to the estate to protect firefighters tackling a blaze in a supermarket on an upper deck of the estate. Tensions had flared after an elderly woman died during a police search of her flat.

Jacobs denies murder. The trial continues.

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[Jonny Rawlings](#) | 10 March 2014 11:13 am

I wonder if the Barbican was on the "symbolic areas" list "because anyone could cross it from one side to another without descending to street level, making it "impossible to police".

Nah, didn't think so.

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[danyey](#) | 10 March 2014 1:18 pm

I have yet to meet a person who can cross the Barbican from one side to another at all.



[Stewie](#) | 11 March 2014 9:32 am

Just supports what I've been saying all along of the poor architecture of the 60s and 70s.

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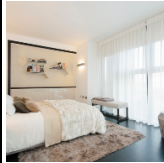
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