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Eastwood Residents Decry Decline Amid Rodent Infestation and Crime Concerns

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Once regarded as a respectable community, Eastwood in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, is now at the centre of growing public frustration, with residents describing the area as

deteriorating rapidly due to persistent fly-tipping, rising crime, and rodent infestations. Despite local authorities maintaining that clean-up and enforcement operations are active, long-time inhabitants say the problems remain unresolved and are making day-to-day life increasingly difficult.

Eastwood has been under a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), a measure used by local councils to restrict behaviours such as public drinking, loitering, and anti-social activity, since 2019. The order was recently extended until 2028, a reflection of the council's acknowledgement of ongoing issues. Yet, many locals argue that enforcement alone has done little to restore order or improve living standards.

Andrew Wilshaw, 45, a resident of over a decade, told *The Sun* that Eastwood has experienced a significant decline: "This used to be a great area but in the past 10 years it has gone downhill before my eyes." Mr Wilshaw, who started a community group on Facebook titled *How Clean in Eastwood*, said its 800 members aim to highlight the severity of local issues and prompt action from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. He claims that fear of retaliation prevents many residents from speaking publicly or sharing images of the town's condition, with many relying on him to post on their behalf.

He added that most long-term residents have already left the area, leaving behind primarily elderly people who are now dealing with the brunt of the situation. "All the people who used to care have had enough and moved out," he said.

Another long-time resident, 74-year-old Dave Russell, has taken an unusual but stark approach to drawing attention to the local rat problem, constructing what he called a "wall of rats" from the remains of vermin caught near his home. He also installed barbed wire on his garden fence to deter break-ins. "You can't have your back door open for fear you'll get a rat in your house. I catch three or four every day," he told *The Sun*.

Mohammed Khan, 34, also recounted how rats repeatedly damaged his vehicle by chewing through its wiring, forcing him to replace it multiple times. His experience highlights how widespread and destructive the infestation has become.

In response to the complaints, the council has pointed to active efforts to address local concerns. Sam Barstow, assistant director of regeneration and environment at Rotherham Council, stated that both weekday and weekend cleaning crews attend Eastwood regularly to empty litter bins and clear fly-tipped waste. According to the council, teams respond to reports of large item dumping, such as mattresses and refrigerators, on average four times per week. Mr Barstow added that enforcement has included hundreds of warning letters, fines, and action in response to more than 300 noise complaints.

While the council insists it is committed to making the borough “clean and welcoming,” many Eastwood residents remain unconvinced, arguing that current efforts are not enough to reverse what they see as years of decline. Without visible and lasting improvements, concerns about public health, property values, and safety in the area are likely to persist.