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**RINGO'S BIRTHPLACE BECOMES FIG-LEAF FOR CONTINUING DEMOLITION IN LIVERPOOL'S WELSH STREETS**

SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Empty Homes Charity are dismayed by the tokenism of Housing Minister Grant Shapps and Liverpool Mayor Joe Anderson who are saving Ringo Starr's birthplace and a handful of other homes on his street, while allowing the demolition of hundreds of nearby homes. SAVE is continuing its legal action to secure a reprieve for the 500 terrace houses in the Welsh Streets where Ringo's birthplace stands. SAVE has bought one of these houses just doors along from Ringo's and a local couple has fixed it up for just £3,000 as an attractive home.

SAVE and Empty Homes have expressed their concern to government ministers that the Beatle's birthplace at 9 Madryn Street must not be used as a smokescreen to hide the scandalous continued clearance of thousands of serviceable Victorian terraces belonging to ordinary people across England. Housing minister Grant Shapps is due to visit Madryn Street today, 14th June, to announce the reprieve to Ringo's house and a handful of other houses on the same street. This once-thriving historic neighbourhood has been left ghostly and boarded up by the failed £2.2bn 'Pathfinder' demolition programme. Grant Shapps promised 'the era of large scale demolition was over' in a damning statement to Parliament last November. But it has since emerged that Shapps's department unwittingly signed off £30m for further clearances.

SAVE recently launched Judicial Review proceedings against the government to expose what has already been accepted as flawed and unlawful decision-making in the aftermath of Pathfinder.

While saving a few buildings, Shapps's compromise deal on Ringo's house, agreed with Liverpool's Mayor Joe Anderson, will still see most of the 500 Welsh Streets homes demolished, and a further 5,000 terraces remain threatened nationwide.

SAVE and Empty Homes believe that all options have not been explored for the re-use of these buildings.

SAVE Director Clem Cecil said, "Ringo's birthplace is an important site, but unless this heralds the start of a real effort by the government and local authorities, together with local residents, to save Liverpool's remaining

terraces, it is a pyrrhic victory, secured by the minister and Liverpool council at the expense of ordinary people's homes and the country's built heritage." David Ireland, Chief Executive of charity Empty Homes said demolition should be a last resort, and that other options remained for Ministers to explore."The house building industry is building less homes than at anytime since the 1920s. The notion that serviceable houses should be demolished to make way for a house building scheme that hasn't even been given planning permission is a dicey game with taxpayer's money. In this market demolishing houses is easy, building new ones is far from certain. The government is rightly encouraging greater reuse of empty stock and its great news that some of the houses are to be reused, but this scheme falls short of what people have a right to expect after a decade of badly managed regeneration in Liverpool."

SAVE'S President Marcus Binney says, "We have fixed up one house for £3,000. We now challenge Liverpool Council to make other houses in Madryn Street available to use for immediate renovation and use by local families." Merseyside Civic Society planner Jonathan Brown has helped co-ordinate local groups. "We're obviously proud and delighted to save a key piece of Beatles' heritage, but it needs to be part of a revived inner city where all houses are safe from back-room deals between local officials and developer interests. We have a long list of people wanting to come back and live in these houses - all we need is a little more help from our friends Mayor Anderson and Minister Shapps."



Madryn Street, May 2012. How much will survive?

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, journalists and planners. It is a

strong, independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment.

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Empty Homes are an independent charity. We help people create homes from empty property and campaign for more empty homes to be brought into use, for the benefit of those in housing need.

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Also see local campaign group website for latest press releases: Welsh Streets Home Group <http://www.welshstreets.co.uk/>

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