



PRESS RELEASE 22nd JULY

Tomorrow, Liverpool Council will decide whether to approve an application to demolish 440 homes on the Welsh Streets in Toxteth, the birthplace of Beatles drummer Ringo Starr.

The proposals have been condemned as 'social cleansing' by architect and TV personality George Clarke, appointed by Grant Shapps MP as the Government's Independent Empty Homes Advisor.

The Liverpool hearing is the latest battle of a nine year campaign by SAVE Britain's Heritage, who have supported residents battling John Prescott's £2.2bn proposals to clear tens of thousands of Victorian terraces in northern cities.

Social landlord Plus Dane Group want to replace 440 Victorian homes with 150 new build properties. Under pressure from campaigners, they have so far agreed to spare 40 homes, including Number 9 Madryn Street, which has become an international tourist attraction for Beatles devotees.

Especially contentious is the proposed demolition of an inhabited part of the site – some 160 homes.

Demolition will mean defiance of a recent High Court ruling that Ministers acted unlawfully over allocation of a £70m housing fund, and will prove awkward for Communities Secretary Eric Pickles, who endorsed George Clarke's recent recommendations that housing demolition should be a 'last resort'.

The £70m transition fund was earmarked to take areas out of demolition following the government's decision to halt John Prescott's discredited £2.2bn 'Pathfinder' programme in November 2011.

Despite the ruling that the money was allocated unlawfully, the government has not sought to intervene on the Welsh Streets and is standing by while Liverpool Council and Plus Dane proceed with proposals for mass demolitions.

SAVE intends to return to court if the Government continues to fail to find a remedy following the ruling. So far everything is pointing to the extreme impotence and incompetence of the government in this matter: they took the bold move of abandoning the destructive Pathfinder policy, but are yet to establish a way to encourage Local Authorities to bring homes back into use, despite Ministerial Statements to the contrary.

Former Housing Minister Grant Shapps made a high profile visit to Ringo's childhood home last June, promising to put empty homes in the hands of local people, to allow rapid renovation. A year later the same properties remain derelict, controlled by the HCA-funded Plus Dane Group.

Last year, the government funded a survey commissioned by SAVE, of several properties on the Welsh Streets. This established that it would take on average £30,000-£40,000 to refurbish each property. Refurbished properties would fetch from £65,000, and still more once the uncertainty of clearance was lifted from the area.

The refurbishment approach has been consistently undermined by the Council's refusal to lift clearance status on the properties. The Feasibility Study concluded: "Current values are artificially suppressed by the statutory renewal area status that appears on the local land charges search, which makes mortgaging the properties impossible and creates uncertainty and risk, the key factors that undermine market confidence."

The Welsh Streets Home Group has been working with Liverpool architects Constructive Thinking and come up with designs for the Welsh Streets that deliver the number of new builds that the council and Plus Dane wish to see on the site, but retain a further 54 houses. The

WSHG is not objecting to the scheme, but it seeking an amendment that reflects these possibilities.

Nina Edge of Welsh Streets Home Group says: “The designs show how the same number of new houses, the same size, with gardens and off road parking can be built in the phase A area alongside a larger number of retained houses. By replacing semi-detached units with terraces, it is possible to retain 54 more houses for refurbishment...This increases the housing density and retains a heritage and park-side feel.”

SAVE led objections to the proposed demolition and new build; we are supporting the Constructive Thinking proposals that retain 8% more of the houses and deliver the same amount of new build that Plus Dane is proposing.

SAVE believes Phase B should be removed from clearance. This is an **inhabited** area of the Welsh Streets where refurbishment work has recently been carried out. Phase B’s inhabitants have been promised new homes: this must be respected – homes can be provided for those who wish to move on the rest of the site.

Should these amendments be made SAVE would consider dropping its objections. Should no amendments be made, SAVE would have no alternative but to seek a Public Inquiry. A SAVE petition to retain the Welsh Streets has almost 1,000 signatures.

English Heritage advised Plus Dane to consider retaining the original “higher quality” housing on Wynnstay Street. This advice is being ignored in the present application.

SAVE owns a property on the Welsh Streets, a few doors up from Ringo Starr’s house on Madryn Street. It is inhabited by Guardians on the Camelot vacant property scheme.

SAVE bought No21 to show that these terraced houses are inhabitable and make pleasant homes. The Welsh Streets consist of a large area of empty terraced housing in Toxteth, named after the Welsh builders who constructed them, and their names refer to places and sites in Wales.

The Welsh Streets are a 20 minute walk from Liverpool Cathedral and are near the leafy Princes Park.

SAVE Director Clementine Cecil says:

“The scale of demolition proposed in this application is wrong - it’s against government policy and in flies in the face of local projected population increases. Instead of regenerating the Welsh streets this scheme uses public money to manage its decline.”

SAVE President Marcus Binney says: “Everyone believes that the discredited ‘bulldoze the north’ policy has ended. Outrageously, due to the government’s inability and unwillingness to implement its own policy the death throes of pathfinder are as cruel and violent as the previous decade of brutal evictions and clearances.”

The Welsh Streets, Liverpool



Voelas Street in 2004 before being emptied and tinned up



21 and 23 Madryn Street. 21 belongs to SAVE and is inhabited by two young people



David Cameron and Michael Heseltine visiting the Welsh Streets in 2007



Madryn Street



For more information and images please contact:

SAVE Director Clem Cecil on clem.cecil@savebritainsheritage.org
/07968 003 595, or **Jonathan Brown** on jonathan.jrjbrown@gmail.com
/07806590325

Notes for Editors

- John Prescott's notorious Housing Market Renewal 'Pathfinders' spent £2.2bn buying up and bulldozing 30,000 Victorian terraced houses in the north and midlands, often resorting to compulsory purchase to oust homeowners.
- BBC Radio 4 - Renovation fund used for demolition
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21675093>
- Rather than face full Judicial Review, Communities Minister Eric Pickles finally accepted a 'quashing order' in June.

- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/legal/clg-told-to-put-a-stop-to-demolition-or-face-court/6527223.article>
- Bridget Hogan Story
<http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/88-year-old-bootle-woman-evicted-home-3349526>
 - Housing Minister Mark Prisk Statement and comment
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130510/wmstext/130510m0001.htm>
 - Alicia Rose story, Edge Hill <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-22397521>
 - Gateshead story <http://www.sbresidents.org/>
 - Welsh Sts Ed Vulliamy story
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/apr/21/fight-to-save-ringo-starr-estate>
 - George Clarke social cleansing story
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/mar/27/liverpool-rotting-housing-renewal-pathfinder>
 - Homes for £1 Daily Mail story
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2295470/Tale-Two-Kensingtons-In-London-average-house-price-19m-Liverpool-homes-sale-1.html>
 - Don Foster MP announces George Clarke Recommendations
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/91-million-cash-to-tackle-over-6000-empty-and-derelict-homes>
 - Huffington Post and Big Issue journalist Adam Forrest on the unlearned lessons of empty homes policy
http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/adam-forrest/britains-empty-homes-the-unlearned-lessons_b_2203836.html

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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London EC1M 6EJ.
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