

PRESS RELEASE

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REPORT EXPOSES WASTEFULNESS OF TOXTETH STREET DEMOLITIONS

**LEADING STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
CRITICISES PLANS TO DEMOLISH 500 HOMES**

A report by one of Britain's leading structural engineers has challenged grounds for the Council's proposed demolition of 500 houses in Toxteth Street, East Manchester.

The report, commissioned by SAVE Britain's Heritage, and submitted as evidence for the forthcoming Compulsory Purchase Order Inquiry in September, concludes that the existing houses are built to a surprisingly high standard, that most are in good condition, and all are easily capable of refurbishment. In his report, Brian Morton MBE, former Engineer to Canterbury Cathedral, confesses to being 'baffled' by figures supplied by New East Manchester Ltd relating to the condition of the buildings. Mr Morton states:

'I simply do not accept that surveys carried out in 2000 and 2005 indicated that 77% of dwellings surveyed were assessed as unfit or defective.'

In his assessment of the condition of the streets and houses Mr Morton continues his challenge:

'...here one gets the impression of a well organised plan with wide streets and reasonable space at the rear of the houses ...the external assessment indicates to me houses very well built with considerable care, by craftsmen who were experienced in building this form of construction ...I did not see any indications of structural settlement of any of the main elements of these buildings ...I consider that the buildings are well founded for there not to be signs of significant structural ground movement.'

He concludes: '...[I] saw very little to suggest a need for any significant building work associated with restoring them back to their original condition ... **I believe that with these reasonably simple structures, the cost of refurbishment would be less than 50% of the cost of demolition.**'

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been supporting residents in the Toxteth Street area in efforts to prevent the CPO and demolition of their houses. An exhibition at the Strawberry Duck pub, in Clayton, East Manchester on Friday 29 August will showcase alternative schemes for refurbishment, devised by Mark Hines Associates and commissioned by SAVE.

Notes to editors:

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been one of the strongest critics of the demolitions proposed as part of the government's Housing Market Renewal (Pathfinder) Initiative. SAVE's hard-hitting report on Pathfinder, published in 2006, highlighted the devastating effects of these clearances on both the communities and the architectural cohesion of towns and cities. SAVE has also drawn attention to wastefulness of demolition. SAVE's position has been vindicated by a report by the Commons Committee of Public Accounts published in June 2008. The report warns of '...a risk that demolition sites, rather than newly built houses, will be the Programme's legacy' and concludes that 'the needs of those who wish to remain in an area should not be overlooked in developing more mixed and sustainable communities.'

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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Brian Morton MBE C.Eng FICE Dip Conservation(AA) IHBC now acts as full-time consultant to The Morton Partnership Ltd, a Practice he formed in 1966. He has been involved in appraising historic buildings for over 40 years, and during this period was Engineer at Lincoln Cathedral for 10 years and Canterbury Cathedral for a further 10 years. He now sits on the Fabric Commission of Westminster Abbey. In January 2005 he was awarded an MBE for 'Services to Heritage - Conservation Engineering'.

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