

LOGO MISSING?

EDGE LANE CPO

SAVE Britain's Heritage

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Introduction

1. SAVE Britain's Heritage is an independent charity founded in 1975. SAVE campaigns for threatened: a) historic buildings and; b) areas, across the UK and in issues that affect the historic built environment. Over the last two years we have become especially involved with local groups in Pathfinder areas, supporting their community interests whilst ourselves gaining a broad understanding of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative's aims and varying methods in each case.

Liverpool's Heritage and Pathfinder

2. In terms of Liverpool's wider and recognised historic interest, SAVE published "The Agony of Georgian Liverpool" jointly with the Georgian Group in 1984. SAVE has been actively involved in a number of campaigns in Liverpool, from the Lyceum to the Pupil-Teacher College. Importantly, as the historic Second City of Empire, Liverpool has a stunning heritage beyond the Georgian, in both the large and small buildings that make up its urban fabric, richer than many other UK cities. This is reflected in the comments of Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman of English Heritage who described Liverpool as "England's greatest Victorian city", and in the inscription of the city as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Much of what is proposed for Edge Lane will erase Victorian elements.
3. While much was lost in the clearances of the post war years, that which remains is special and needs to be treasured, and not merely cast aside or flattened. In particular, the townscape and streetscape of the Edge Lane area are an attractive

part of this stunning heritage, and it is a heritage of which Liverpudlians are rightly proud.

4. We understand the proposals for this New Heartlands Pathfinder to be among the more destructive of those proposed by the Pathfinder bodies nationally, in terms of damage to the built heritage. We hold that much of this destruction is entirely unnecessary. There is simply no need for destruction on the scale proposed.
5. Confirmation of the cpo and its consequential planning proposal for wide scale demolition would simply repeat the mistakes of the past. Indeed, the proposals would complete the demolitions first proposed in the 1960s. Merseyside is no exception.
6. The acute loss to the built heritage on Merseyside proposed under Pathfinder has rightly been the focus of national criticism from bodies including the Civic Trust, the Ancient Monuments Society, the Victorian Society, the Georgian Group, Friends of the Earth and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, all of whom are co-signatories with SAVE of dialogue with Government deploring the scale of damage. Furthermore, respected local interests including the Merseyside Civic Society, local councillors and MPs have made clear their intense disquiet about this scheme.

The Question for the Inquiry and First Secretary of State

7. In the question of mass demolitions on the scale proposed for the Edge Lane, the key point is:

whether the loss of good historic buildings and their attendant communities is balanced out by wider gains for the community that would (and not might) result from the demolition.
8. This question was clearly summarised by this Inspector in the two recent Pathfinder CPO inquiries in Whitefield, Nelson. The same is true of Edge Lane. The community in and around Edge Lane has nothing whatsoever to gain from the demolition of their homes, their community and its links.

9. Consequently it is impossible to divorce discussion of historic areas such as the Edge Lane from consideration of the local community. The community brings the heritage to life and the buildings are, respectively, the heritage of the community.
10. The purpose of the Housing Market Renewal Programme does not require mass demolition of the historic building fabric such as Edge Lane. It can equally be used to help areas through careful repair and inspired leadership. Government policy makes this clear.
11. SAVE considers that the Edge Lane proposals have little to do with Housing Market Renewal. The reality of the proposals is that “regeneration” is being hijacked as a vehicle for a road-widening scheme coupled with an apparent lucrative land-grab opportunity leaving the existing community destroyed.
12. There is a serious question mark over the reality of a key driver for the Scheme, namely, whether the housing market in the area has actually failed. Indeed, house prices in the area have doubled despite the blight of the cpo (thereby also *raising* the acquisition costs by £5m) This underscores the hidden strength of the community in this area, and the attractiveness of Edge Lane to incoming people as it presently stands, even in the face of a cpo.

Mistakes of the Past now Proposed Repeated

13. The Edge Lane scheme would result in the creation of a major highway carving through the area to the centre of town at speed, with (so far as is suggested) retail and office space along its route. This sort of plan was met with great favour and fever in the 1950s and 60s with results that are now widely rued. For example:
 - a) Maid Marion Way in Nottingham;
 - b) Birmingham’s inner ring road, or on a smaller scale;
 - c) the Macclesfield by-pass that cuts through the heart of the town.
14. The trend is now to undo the damage created by these schemes, and rightly so.
15. Road widening schemes of the type proposed for the Edge Lane are generally now known to have a disastrous effect on the built heritage of an area, carelessly

cutting through it and in the process creating an impenetrable barrier cutting off one part of a town from another. SAVE first highlighted this in its publication “The Concrete Jerusalem” in 1976. The availability of pedestrian crossing does not relieve this harm. Instead, such roads divide the community like a river. The inevitable result is that one of the two banks/parts dies. Houses near the highway are blighted by noise and pollution and shops and small business fail because of the hostile road environment. The entire character of the street changes to one of a highway for cars, not a street for people. The price of a highway into Liverpool’s centre is the local community. Given historic lessons learned and today’s planning experience, that price is both too high and is poor city planning.

16. The claim that this road widening scheme is needed to enhance Liverpool as the European Capital of Culture is used by its apologists without a hint of irony, yet the very idea is in reality laughable. The destruction of 367 houses, and the compromising of the setting of a listed park, a number of listed buildings, a Georgian conservation area and hundreds of locally valued buildings which help constitute Liverpool’s built heritage is entirely contrary to the concept of a Capital of Culture. Essentially, the justification that to create the “Capital of Culture” one must destroy a part of it is self-evidently bizarre and betrays a failure to appreciate the cultural fabric of Liverpool.

17. The effect of these proposals on the built heritage would be very negative indeed. The proposals would cause a significant degree of harm which is not justifiable.

The Attractiveness of Edge Lane

18. The Edge Lane streetscape is attractive:

- a) in many ways it is typical of Liverpool, with the rhythm of three to four storey bay windowed properties facing the road and two to three on the streets behind;

here on this major route in to Liverpool much care was lavished on the architectural ornamentation and material quality of the buildings in a clear effort to convey to the city’s visitors the impression of a wealthy, dignified municipality.

- b) the grids of terrace housing are reflective of the industrial city rooted in a mercantile past. It is difficult to understand whether the promoter's description of the existing townscape as "monolithic" is a positive or negative. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. In SAVE's view it is a positive and characteristic feature of this city. Consequently, removal of a large segment of the grid would harmfully undermine its existing nature;
- c) within the grids of streets, the buildings of the area are not all of one type. There is a range of types. There are different sized houses on different streets. They are flexible, spacious and adaptable.

19. Properly managed Edge Lane would:

- i) Be very attractive streets;
- ii) With the housing providing a wide variety of accommodation and of different types; and
- iii) have all the ingredients for stable mixed communities remaining in place rather than requiring them to be built from scratch.

As evinced by similar layouts on main roads elsewhere in the city.

Alleged Housing Market Failure

20. These houses remain popular and in demand in themselves. The key disincentives to purchasing them are:

- a) lack of availability and;
- b) the blight of the scheme and;
- c) in cases a bad perception of the area.

21. There remains a demand for the housing which gives the lie to an alleged housing market failure.

22. The question of how an area is perceived by others is no reason nor justification for the demolition in the public interest of the buildings within it. Indeed, nor is

the desire for a different perception compelling. The CPRE's publication "Useless Old Houses?" by Clare Mumford looks in detail at the question of terraced housing in the North West (see Appendix). The publication concludes (at page 30) that the problems in Pathfinder areas are not so much to do with the housing stock itself but instead with the *reputation* of areas as a result of and consequent upon the way in which they are managed. For example, the failure by a local authority to collect waste or undertake repairs of its own housing stock can too easily be a self-fulfilling prophesy in itself running down an area towards its demolition. The authorities have in their hands the choice to manage or not to manage a given area. An area's reputation in part rests on that choice. Clearly, once a cpo has been made, or a policy to demolish been pursued, an authority will be disinclined to properly manage an area such as Edge Lane, seeing the same as a waste of its resources.

23. Furthermore, one person's issues are another's opportunity. For example, the housing stock in Edge Lane lends itself to refurbishment by owner occupiers at their own expense given the opportunity to purchase- an opportunity presently denied.
24. Proper management remains the key alternative to demolition and is clearly possible to undertake at Edge Lane. It cannot be said that Edge Lane cannot be properly managed, not indeed is this alleged.
25. Examples of proper management include:
 - a) The Dingle, Liverpool;
 - b) The use of Homezones by the Manchester Methodist Housing Association
26. The question of availability and the way an area is managed go hand in hand. Frequently houses in clearance areas are owned by local authorities and/or registered social landlords. Edge Lane is no exception. Neither group is willing (nor are the RSLs apparently able) to release the housing on to the market. Consequently, the Council holds the key to supply to the market. By withholding houses from sale, it is self-evident that there can be no sales, and therefore, demand can be choked. The RSLs may incentivise tenants to leave and refuse to

take on new tenants, thereby choking rental supply. However, given the current state of the Liverpool housing market there is little doubt that Edge Lane housing would rapidly be snapped up, re-occupied, and refurbished if the opportunity was given. In places such as Edge Lane West, they appear to be a large part of the problem, not the cure.

27. Indeed, given the requirement to achieve best value, it is surprising that the local authorities have not offered the homes onto the private market. In not doing so, the authorities appear to have delayed the refurbishment of the properties by others despite at the same time pressing for completion of the project for 2008 City of Culture.

28. The RSLs and local authorities have through their own actions the power to blight an area and depress its housing market by choice. In places they are the problem, not the cure. Consequently, there is, essentially, no real justification for demolition of the housing proposed.

Lack of Evidence for Demolition

29. SAVE is are strongly concerned that the evidence base for the clearance of the area is lacking in terms of:

- a) understanding the nature of the market in the area;
- b) understanding the built heritage and its fabric and consequently;
- c) in failing to assess the alternatives to demolition

30. For example, the following has not been done:

- a) accurate estimates of the acquisition cost figures;
- b) the use of built heritage survey results to inform the Area Development Framework;
- c) full and far consultation with the community, evident in the high level of local opposition present at inquiry.

31. This is compounded by the recent strengthening of the housing market across the north, and even more so in Liverpool. In its condemnation of the community as unsustainable, the Scheme promoters and local authorities show a failure to understand and grapple with the nature of this community and the informal links that have grown up over the years and remain within that community.
32. The tools with which to understand the historic built environment of the area have been put forward by English Heritage. However, it would appear that these have been rejected by the Merseyside Pathfinder. We believe that the lines were drawn on the map delineating the clearance area long before the community was consulted and long before English Heritage gave the Pathfinder the tools to assess the heritage. This indicates that the issue of demolition was prejudged before assessment of the area was undertaken. That is to put the demolition cart before the regeneration horse.
33. The levels of clearance in the area reflects the Pathfinder demolition targets that have now been scrapped by the Audit Commission and revised radically *downwards* by New Hearlands as a result of market recovery and the opposition of community and amenity groups. However, there remains no need for the present scale of demolition given refurbishment remains an alternative option.

Alternatives

34. In reality, and in this area, the alternatives to demolition are wide. There are a number of schemes currently being pioneered across the North of England and Pathfinder areas which provide examples of alternatives to demolition and which also deal with housing market issues, choice, and with job creation/business incubation. For example:
 - a) Urban Splash in Salford;
 - b) Adactus Housing Association's Tardis Terrace;
 - c) Homeszones in Manchester;
 - d) the Hothouse scheme in Stoke-on-Trent.

35. However, these do not appear to have been properly explored in the Liverpool context. The course chosen, demolition, is the least inspired and least desirable option for Edge Lane. It is also the most damaging.
36. SAVE finds it difficult to believe that the new commercial and retail interests proposed for the new road are in the interests of a sustainable community when the existing commercial and road infrastructure could be put to better use without having to destroy a community and its heritage in the process. Nor does SAVE believe that the eviction of long-established tenants and owner occupiers to make way for high value luxury apartments is in the interest of social inclusion. In 2005 it would be remarkable for a compelling case in the public interest to be made out on the basis of the choice of tenant social group- but that appears to be the case in Edge Lane.
37. The alternative to the new highway, proposed by BEVEL, deserves proper investigation. BEVEL deserves all credit for taking a more inspired approach to the area than the local authority. This alternative demonstrates that it is possible to sensitively and creatively reconfigure the existing road to meet highway requirements given engineering expertise. It is surprising that the authorities have not considered such an alternative itself. That such an alternative is considered through the inquiry process and not previously demonstrates flawed community engagement.
38. In addition, as a matter of common sense, it cannot be said that there are not other alternatives to the road scheme/gateway proposed. For example, it has been recently reported that the existing divisive effects of the 4 lane highway in London's Albertopolis/Imperial College area are being considered presently. One proposal is to remove all highway markings in order to slow down traffic and improve local community amenity. By contrast, the Scheme's fast road proposal to the City centre is a transport planning dinosaur, effectively removing this existing historic gateway to the City and introducing a gateway of cultural mediocrity.

Conclusions

39. In summary, SAVE considers the proposals deeply and fundamentally flawed.

40. SAVE does not consider there to be a housing market failure other than caused by the local authorities choking housing supply and RSLs choking tenant supply. These bodies hold the answer to the question of market failure in their own hands. It would be unjustifiable to support the CPO and demolition on the vast scale proposed on such a basis.
41. SAVE considers the proposals fundamentally flawed because:
- a) their primary aim is a questionable road widening scheme;
 - b) the alternative aim of addressing market failure is illusory and in reality does not exist.
42. SAVE expresses surprise that English Partnerships has chosen to exercise its powers to acquire land for such proposals in light of the above.
43. The demolitions proposed for the Edge Lane clearance area are unnecessary and will be of little benefit to anyone.
44. The supposed gains from this mammoth and pointless scheme could be wrought from a lesser scheme using the existing structure.
45. The scheme would be an appalling waste of limited public funds (including a vast public inquiry), and as the housing market strengthens so the cost of the scheme rises.
46. There are times when aggressive interference isn't needed and a light hand is. That is the case with the Edge Lane. Proper analysis of the area would have revealed this at a much earlier stage.
47. There is a difference between progress and change for change's sake. In this case, change for change's sake is proposed. That is not a compelling reason for acquisition and demolition of these properties.
48. Social problems won't be cured through mass demolition. Instead, a start can be made through paying care and attention to the people and the local environment they inhabit, not bulldozing them, both metaphorically and literally.

49. Given proper management, there is no reason why the City of Culture aspirations cannot be met by other and less intrusive means.

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