

## PRESS RELEASE RE MINOR CANON ROW, ROCHESTER

### GLORY OF ROCHESTER TO BE WONDERFULLY RESTORED

Rochester Cathedral announced today that Minor Canon Row, one of the historic jewels of Rochester, is to be restored by specialists The Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust. They will restore the Row to its original 7 town houses, and recapture its Georgian integrity. The Trust will also be responsible for restoration work on the medieval 'Priors Gate' adjoining Minor Canon Row.

Built between 1722 and 1735 to house the 'minor canons' of the cathedral, this iconic terrace has for many years become increasingly dilapidated. The Cathedral invited offers for the Row from specialist developers last year, and The Spitalfields Trust, with their national reputation for projects of this nature, outbid their rivals to secure involvement in this prestigious piece of conservation.

Achieving the sale of such a high-profile and sensitive site has involved negotiations with national, regional and local bodies to ensure the best way forward. Conservation, Planning and Heritage authorities have all backed the scheme, which will unlock a long-standing problem for Rochester and the Cathedral.

Very Revd Adrian Newman, Dean of Rochester, says: *Minor Canon Row is an irreplaceable part of Rochester's history. It remains one of the places that people come to see when they visit here, and for many years it has been in desperate need of attention. The Spitalfields Trust have a national reputation second to none for restoration and conservation work of this kind, and it is a coup for Rochester that they have decided to get involved in this project. It is good for the Cathedral, good for The Spitalfields Trust, and good for Medway.*

Work to restore Minor Canon Row should begin within the next few months with the aim of completing the work within 2 years.

The Cathedral is not at liberty to spend the money it raises from the sale of Minor Canon Row, which by law has to be invested in an endowment. The interest from the endowment – like the rents from the previous tenants of the Row – forms part of the cathedral's income to support its day-to-day work.

18<sup>th</sup> September 2008

*Ends.*



**Note to editors:**

Minor Canon Row is of exceptional significance, recorded as being built between 1722 – 1723, apart from No. 7 at the east end, which was built in 1735 for the Cathedral Organist. Historically, the main row was home to the Minor Canons and their families, and Dame Sybil Thorndike lived as a child at No. 2 from 1886 - 92 when her father was a Minor Canon. Architecturally, it is an outstanding example of early 18<sup>th</sup> century urban domestic architecture and despite the conversion of most of the row to apartments in the 1950's, much of the original fabric and features have remarkably survived.

In order to facilitate the sale and renovation of Minor Canon Row, the Cathedral has bought and refurbished 2 other local properties which have been used to re-house Minor Canon Row's longest-standing tenants.

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