



The London

Trying to destroy the market for street art is locking the door after the horse has bolted," says Barton.

square's residents, who were in the process of getting planning permission to protect it.

A new spa-ring partner

IT WILL all be kicking off between God and Mammon this afternoon, as the Diocese of London decides to lease St Mark's Church in Mayfair to Sanctuary founder George Hammer for conversion to a health spa.

The latest twist in the saga is the intervention by Nicky Gumbel, vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton. The Diocese's position is that it cannot afford to pay for the restoration of the crumbling Grade I-listed church. But Gumbel says HTB is "ready, willing and able to take on the work St Mark's needs to survive".

The Diocese also claims that there are enough churches in Mayfair already, to which Gumbel replies that both HTB and

St Paul's Onslow Square are overflowing. "The Sunday congregation at St Paul's has grown from zero to a thousand people in the last 18 months," he says. "We think we could do something similar at St Mark's."

With an offer on the table to restore the church and at its own expense and still pay rent, the Diocese is struggling to explain why it is so determined to sell to Hammer, especially after plans for the spa conversion were rejected by Westminster council.

The Diocese spokesman could only say there was some kind of a "deal" with Hammer the church feels bound by, but refused to elaborate.

The poets take a Raine check

NEW College don and poet Craig Raine is taking an admirably dispassionate view of the race to become the Oxford University's next professor of poetry. So far Ruth Padel and Derek Walcott are the frontrunners. "Ideally, the Professor of Poetry should be a great poet and a good critic," Raine tells me. "These talents don't necessarily go together. It's a testing

combination. "I don't think there are any poet candidates who are up to the job. We don't want another critic like Ricks. So my suggestion would be a novelist or dramatist — a practitioner, at any rate. [Ian] McEwan, [Tom] Stoppard.

"Stoppard, as is well known, is super-clever. Both too intelligent, of course, to take the job."

the next generation

The Age of St Paul's Square. Ken I three mother reportedly er lunches and § Sardinia toge

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