

CONFIDENTIAL FILING

Re-use of Redundant Hospital Sites
in the Green Belt.

NATIONAL HEALTH

March 1987

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
30.3.87							
6.4.87							
9.4.87							
PREM 19/2348							



SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU
TELEPHONE: 01-270 6720

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P

9 April 1987

Dear Nicholas,

N Ridley

RE-USE OF REDUNDANT HOSPITAL SITES IN THE GREEN BELT

Thank you for copying to Malcolm Rifkind your minute of 27 March to the Prime Minister about the re-use of redundant hospital sites in the Green Belt.

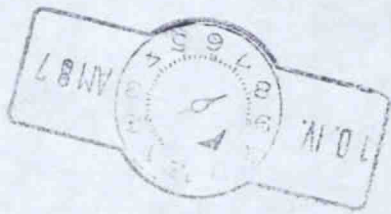
I agree that planning authorities in England should be given guidance on this subject and am content with the terms of your proposed announcement. None of the hospital buildings currently available for disposal in Scotland or likely to become available in the near future lie within Green Belts and I therefore see no need either for us to be associated with the terms of your announcement or to take corresponding action.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Norman Tebbit, Norman Fowler and Tony Newton.

*Yours
Michael*

MICHAEL ANCRAM

NAT. HEALTH: Redundant Hospital Sites : March 87





Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

CABINET OFFICE,
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2ASTel No: 270 0020
270 02966th April 1987

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley AMICE MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 3EB

NBR

D. Nicholas,

RE-USE OF REDUNDANT HOSPITAL SITES IN THE GREEN BELT

Thank you for the copy of your minute of 27 March to the Prime Minister.

I am content with the planning guidelines which you propose for future use of redundant hospital sites in the Green Belt.

You noted, rightly, the sensitivity of these issues. Proposals for changes in local hospital services and for increased housing development in the Green Belt bring together two of the potentially most sensitive local issues. I support Norman Fowler's view that the National Health Service must seek the best available return from these sites and the view, which he and you share, that this must be consistent with our Green Belt policy and offer a sensible viable use for the land released. There are clear dangers that if development were blocked, no viable use for the sites would be established and they would become a blight rather than of benefit.

Where I see the greatest danger in this, however, is at the earlier stage of deciding which hospital sites are truly redundant. If local interests believe that hospital services are being curtailed on one site, or moved elsewhere, solely or primarily in order to release valuable development land for commercial use, we can expect two powerful local lobbies to combine. It will therefore be important that the case for making these sites redundant should stand up on grounds of the rationalisation and development of health care services.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister, Norman Fowler, Malcolm Rifkind and Tony Newton.

NORMAN TEBBIT



JA

EBG

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

30 March 1987

Dear Robin

RE-USE OF REDUNDANT HOSPITAL SITES IN THE GREEN BELT

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 27 March, together with a draft of the announcement which he proposes to make.

The Prime Minister is content, subject to the views of colleagues, with the proposed planning guidelines for dealing with the future use of redundant hospitals in the Green Belt.

I am copying this letter to Andrew Lansley (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Geoffrey Podger (Department of Health and Social Security), Robert Gordon (Scottish Office) and to Mike O'Connor (Department of Health and Social Security).

Yours

Mark Addison

(Mark Addison)

Robin Young, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

✓



CCB/9
✓
CCBI
Prime Minister!
Content with the
proposed planning guidelines,
subject to the views of colleagues?

PRIME MINISTER

RE-USE OF REDUNDANT HOSPITAL SITES IN THE GREEN BELT

See job
JGW
27/3.

A large number of mental hospitals are likely to become redundant in the next few years as patients are moved out under the Care in the Community programme. Some of these hospitals are in the Green Belt. I have been considering how we can best manage the planning aspects of those sites so that we can maintain our Green Belt policy while ensuring that the sites can be sold for an acceptable after-use.

Norman Fowler has emphasised to me that the proceeds from the sale of these sites will be an important part of the funding for the new hospital building programme. I attach a copy of his letter of 19 October 1986.

Officials from my Department carried out a study of some of the sites to investigate their suitability for re-use within the terms of our Green Belt policy. They concluded that in a limited number of cases it may be possible to find suitable uses within the restricted range which is usually acceptable in the Green Belt. For example, some of the buildings might be used by institutions looking for conference or training facilities. But in many cases that will not be a viable option. The choice then will be between leaving the buildings empty or under-used, with correspondingly low value, or allowing some other use perhaps involving conversion or redevelopment of the existing buildings.

It will be for local planning authorities to consider the future of individual hospitals in the first place. But if they are to strike a sensible balance between protection of the Green Belt and viable re-use of the sites, they will need some guidance. I propose, therefore, to answer an arranged PQ which would set out guidelines for local planning authorities. I attach a draft of the



announcement which William Waldegrave and I have agreed with Tony
Newton and Norman Fowler. *I am insisting you in view of
the sensitivity of these issues*

I would be grateful for your agreement to proceed on these lines.

I am copying this to Norman Tebbit, Norman Fowler, Malcolm
Rifkind and Tony Newton.

NR

27 March 1987

RE-USE OF REDUNDANT HOSPITAL SITES IN THE GREEN BELT

QUESTION

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy for the future use of redundant hospital sites in the Green Belt.

ANSWER

1. In the next few years many older hospitals, especially those for the mentally ill or mentally handicapped, will no longer be needed. A number of these hospitals are located in the Green Belts. The Government has been considering how planning for the future of these redundant hospitals can best be handled having regard to Green Belt policy as set out in DOE Circular 14/84.
2. Local planning authorities are responsible for considering the future of individual sites. When it is known that particular sites are likely to become redundant, it will often be appropriate to bring forward policies or proposals for the future use of those sites when considering alterations to structure or local plans. Some planning authorities are already doing this. Because there are a number of sites in several areas the Department of the Environment has prepared guidelines to assist local planning authorities in preparing policies for the sites and in dealing with any planning applications relating to them. The Secretary of State for the Environment and his Inspectors will have regard to the guidelines when dealing with any planning appeals or structure plan alterations which come before him for decision.
3. Many of the sites share common characteristics. The original hospitals are often large groups of buildings and were typically built between 50 and 150 years ago. Many ancillary buildings for different purposes have been added since. The hospitals are often on the edges of built-up areas and stand in large open grounds.
4. In planning for the future of these buildings and their sites

the aim should be to use them for purposes compatible with the Green Belt as set out in circular 14/84, which can include institutional uses. The size, layout and form of the buildings may, however, make them unsuitable for such purposes. In such cases it will be necessary to consider whether, in the terms of the Green Belt circular, "very special circumstances" exist that would warrant the change of use of the buildings or the construction of new buildings.

5. In some cases it may be possible to convert the existing buildings for housing or other uses, perhaps with some demolition of ancillary buildings. But if that is not a practical solution then the future of the buildings and the site, and the possibility of redevelopment, will need to be carefully considered. Putting the sites to beneficial use will be preferable to allowing the buildings to remain empty and the site to become derelict. Those are special circumstances that may warrant a change of use or new development. Planning permission will be required if there is a change of use of the existing buildings or if new buildings are put up.

6. Whatever the future use of the site it should be planned with careful regard to its contribution to the Green Belt and to the amenity of the area - for example, landscaped grounds and mature trees should be preserved and maintained and opportunities should be sought to open up parts of it to public access.

Guidelines for the future use of redundant hospital sites in the Green Belt

i. Re-use of the existing buildings for purposes within the accepted Green Belt categories (as set out in DOE circular 14/84) is the preferred option, especially where the buildings are of architectural and historical importance. There may in particular be scope for re-use by institutions.

ii. However, if there is little or no prospect of viable re-use within those categories, then other uses are preferable to allowing the buildings to remain empty or grossly unoccupied. The aim should be to achieve

re-development for other suitable uses by conversion of the existing buildings.

iii. If the existing buildings, or part of them, are unsuitable for conversion, then re-development should not normally occupy a larger area of the site nor exceed the height of the existing buildings. The location of the new buildings should be decided having regard to the main features of the landscape and the need to integrate the new development with its surroundings (eg it may be more appropriate to site new development closer to existing development).

iv. The amenity value of the site should be retained or enhanced where practical by preserving mature trees and keeping or laying out landscaped areas, and if possible opening them to public access with adequate provision for their maintenance.

v. Redevelopment should not normally involve additional expenditure by the public sector on the provision of infrastructure (eg on roads and sewerage) nor should it overload local facilities such as schools and health care facilities.

vi. Local planning authorities should where appropriate include policies on these lines in their development plans.



In my
confidential mail!
W

Adapt: M-Summers
cc. PS/Mr Waldegrave
PS/Mr Tracey
Mr Delafons ov.
Mr Wedd

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY
Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY
Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP

October 19

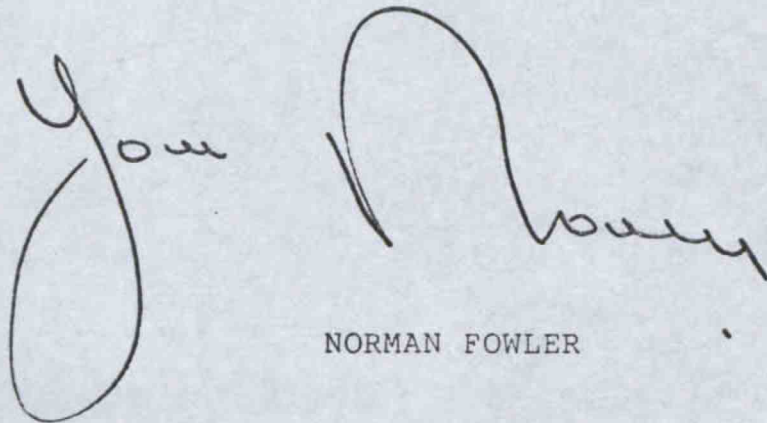
Dear Nick.

As you will know from my speech at Bournemouth last week we have plans to spend some £3 billion on new hospital building over the next three years. A significant proportion of this sum will be funded by the proceeds of the sale of existing hospitals which are surplus to our requirements. About half of the total NHS stock is in land designated as Green Belt and therefore many of the projected sales will be affected by Green Belt policies. It is, of course, important that when we are selling hospital sites we obtain the maximum sale proceeds and this inevitably means that we will be seeking planning permission for whatever commercial development is likely to give the best return.

There is a potential conflict here between our objectives and Green Belt policies. In my view the conflict is more apparent than real, since major hospitals constitute a volume of building greater than the average village. For example, a large mental health institution will comprise residential accommodation for patients and staff, kitchens, workshops, a laundry, offices and perhaps a nurse training school - buildings not normally associated with the open space associated in the Green Belt Policy. Our aim would be to replace these by commercial developments which are sensitively designed, retain those natural features which give a site its character and which do not place any additional demands on the local infra-structure. We are, therefore, in a very different

situation from, for example, a volume builder who will seek to fill sites with as much development as possible often regardless of the effect on the environment.

I think this is a sufficiently important matter to warrant a discussion at Ministerial level and I would like to suggest that Tony Newton should meet William Waldegrave as soon as possible to discuss a way forward. I will ask Tony Newton's office to set up a meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Fowler'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and 'F'.

NORMAN FOWLER

Yds/D.9

principally through a new Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council which will be independent of Government, although subject to guidance from the holder of my office. This Council will succeed the National Advisory Body and will contract with individual institutions for the provision of higher education.

5. Local education authorities will retain control of those colleges which do not provide predominantly for higher education. The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council may contract for the provision of degree and full-time HND and equivalent courses at these colleges. Other courses, including all part-time sub-degrees at colleges remaining under local authority control will become a totally local responsibility: the present expenditure pooling arrangements will end. Responsibility for the 530,000 students on non-advanced further education courses will continue to rest with local authorities.

6. The voluntary and other colleges of higher education which are grant-aided by my Department will be brought within the ambit of the new Funding Council. For the present, however, these arrangements will not be extended to cover the polytechnic and colleges of higher education in Wales.

7. Side by side with the new arrangements for the polytechnics and colleges, we intend to introduce legislation to re-establish the University Grants Committee as an independent statutory body on the lines recommended by the Croham Committee. We accept the Croham recommendations that this body should be smaller, with broadly equal numbers of academic and non-academic members, and a chairman with substantial experience outside the academic world. The new body will be called the Universities Funding Council and its primary responsibility will be the allocation of funds to individual universities under new contractual arrangements.

8. The two new planning and funding bodies which I have announced will help with the implementation of our policies, in particular to encourage more of our young people to go on to higher education. Mr Speaker, the Government already has an outstanding record on access to higher education. Student numbers



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