



cc CST
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24 November 1982

The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment

PLANNING POLICIES AND MISC 14

In recent months I have received letters which criticise two aspects of planning policies and their application. First, there are complaints from small businesses about the efficiency of the authorities and the inflexibility of the planning system in handling their planning applications - you will recall some specific cases in my constituency about which I wrote in the summer. Secondly, the House Builders' Federation have called for a radical reappraisal of green belt policies and a re-examination of the land so classified. They urge a more flexible policy which is responsive to changing housing needs.

I am aware of circular 22/80, which dealt with both matters. I welcome the action Giles Shaw is taking to canvass the view of small businesses and their representatives on how well it is working, and whether planning authorities are being more flexible in their attitudes. I look forward to learning the outcome of these consultations. Perhaps you could ensure that my officials are associated with any proposals which might follow.

On the question of green belt policy, I understand you have asked officials to review the policy and report back. In view of the wider concern about this policy, I wonder whether the future of green belt policy might not be a suitable topic for discussion at MISC 14, which is concerned to identify areas for de-regulation and removing burdens on industry? It is some time since planning policies were considered; and green belt policy may offer scope for some useful action.

More generally, I wonder whether we might look thoroughly at the planning system in the context of our longer term policy thinking for the next Parliament. A general paper reappraising our approach to planning in the light of experience in enterprise zones and the Government's commitment to regulation, might usefully be taken by MISC 14 early next year.

I am copying this letter to the other members of MISC 14 and to John

GEOFFREY HOWE



With the Compliments
of the
Chancellor of the Exchequer's
Private Secretary

Treasury Chambers,
Parliament Street,
S.W.1.