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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

19 October 1981

Dear Alan,

Thank you for your letter of 6 October about the terms of the opening statement on behalf of the Government at the Stansted Airport Public Inquiry.

The main purpose of this statement, which was made by Mr. Barnes on instruction, and approved by the Government Departments concerned, was to set out the main elements of Government policy as they relate to the planning applications before the Inquiry. It was clearly essential to explain why the Government invited the BAA to bring forward proposals for the expansion of Stansted and why it does not favour a fifth terminal at Heathrow or a new airport at Maplin or Severnside.

The Government's airports policy was announced by John Nott in the House of Commons on 17 December 1979 and has been repeated since. Nevertheless the Inspector was concerned that people should be aware at the outset of the Inquiry where the Government stood and indeed this is essential if participants are to make their case effectively. If they support the Heathrow or the Maplin proposals it will be for them to indicate why such an alternative should be pursued notwithstanding the reasons given in December 1979 for rejecting them. In effect it will be for them to show why Government policy should be modified.

Nothing in the Government's statement should be taken as detracting from the rights of objectors - nor if read as a whole can it reasonably be taken in that sense. The Government have

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repeatedly made it clear that the Inquiry will be wide ranging and will give opponents of the Stansted proposals an opportunity of presenting alternative solutions. The Inspector brings an open mind to the issues, and has the benefit of hearing all relevant evidence presented and tested in cross examination. I can assure you that when the Inspector's report is received, the representations made and his conclusions on them will be carefully considered and there will be no question of treating any particular alternative proposal as out of the question because it conflicts with Government policy as put to the Inquiry.

In the light of the concerns expressed in your letter, I am arranging for a copy of this letter to be put before the Inspector.

*Y
Lousier
Rogent*
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Alan Haselhurst, Esq., M.P.