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AT 3/17

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2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:
Your ref:

30 July 1984

Dear Andrew

Thank you for your letter of 10 July about the arrangements for the disposal of surplus industrial and commercial property owned by the GLC and the metropolitan county councils.

will request if required
see p 20
I am afraid that you were under a misapprehension when you wrote to Andrew Turnbull on 31 May. Despite what you say in your second paragraph, Ministers never envisaged English Estates as a substitute for the arrangements that would be necessary for dealing with a range of residual matters. On 28 March this year Ministers decided collectively that the task of disposal of surplus property, as well as other residual tasks, should go to the residuary bodies, which they also decided should be set up in each area. This was not a Departmental decision as you suggest, but one taken by MISC 95 in the light of the proposals in MISC 95(84)6. My Secretary of State announced this decision to the House in a Written Answer on 4 May.

It will primarily be for the residuary bodies themselves, once appointed, to decide how they carry out their tasks, but my Secretary of State will seek powers in the Abolition Bill to enable him to give appropriate guidance. We see no reason why they should not be asked to make early contact with English Estates in the way you envisage - and indeed no reason why they should not welcome any advice and help English Estates can give them.

I have copied my letter, as before, to Andrew Turnbull (No 10), Hugh Taylor (Home Office), Elizabeth Hodgkinson (Education), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Steven Godber (Health and Social Services), Callum McCarthy (Trade and Industry), David Normington (Employment), Dinah Nicols (Transport), Mary Brown (OAL), John Gieve (Chief Secretary's Office), John Graham (Scottish Office), Colin Jones (Welsh Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Mike Bailey (DOE).

John Ballard
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J F BALLARD
Private Secretary

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LOCAL GOVT: Relations Pt 21



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2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

21 June 1984

Dear Andrew

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 31 May to Andrew Turnbull, in which you restate the proposals put forward at an earlier stage for involving English Estates in the abolition exercise as an agent for disposing of particular assets of the authorities we shall be abolishing.

First I must set the record straight. The White Paper, which reflected the agreement reached after discussion of the practicalities of those proposals, did not suggest that English Estates should be employed to dispose of surplus industrial and commercial land and buildings. What it said was that, "In relation to industrial property, the Government will wish to draw on the special skills of the English Industrial Estates Corporation". At that stage we had not finally decided how the disposal of surplus property should be handled. My Secretary of State has however, since announced the decision that this will be one of the functions of the residuary bodies that are to be set up for each area.

My Secretary of State has a high regard for English Estates but he is conscious that it has been asked to take on a number of major projects - notably Chatham Dockyard and on Merseyside - and to take over the industrial assets of the three North East New Towns. These new tasks will make substantial demands on English Estates and its top management, and it is not necessary to involve them in the very large and complex task of handling the GLC/MCC surplus property now that there are to be appointed bodies for that and other purposes acting under Ministerial direction. We understand that the Chairman of English Estates, Christopher Wates, now feels that it would be a mistake for them to undertake this additional task, for which they are not at present equipped (since there will be several thousand properties to be disposed of). But perhaps he could be asked for his latest views on this?

As regards obtaining information about the property holdings of the expiring authorities in order to prepare the way for abolition, my Secretary of State recognises that this must be done, and in good time once the Interim Provisions Bill is enacted. But it cannot be done in a piecemeal fashion. English Estates could, of course, help to evaluate specific items: this must, however, be secondary to identifying and sorting the property that will need to go to the authorities taking over the functions and to the residuary bodies. Without

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that, the abolition timetable would be put under strain. Accordingly we shall need a co-ordinated approach (and a delicate one, giving the attitudes prevailing among staff and authorities) to obtaining this information. It would not be helpful for the English Estates (or indeed any body not directly concerned in abolition) to be involved in this exercise.

My Secretary of State intends that the residuary bodies should be specifically charged with the remit of disposing quickly of the saleable and surplus assets which they will inherit from the abolished authorities. In discharging this task it could well be that the bodies themselves will be very willing to enlist the advice and help of the English Estates - especially in relation to those areas where they are strongly represented. My Secretary of State certainly hopes that this will be possible.

I have copied this letter to Andrew Turnbull and to the recipients of your letter to him.

Yours sincerely

John Ballard

JOHN BALLARD
Private Secretary

Andrew Lansley Esq

*Local Gov
Relations A2,*