



BK/ See of H/B papers
to comments.

PRIME MINISTER

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

At your meeting with the Sainsbury Group on 30 April you asked Kenneth Baker to work up a consultation paper setting out proposals for a radical reform of the development plan system. We have announced our intention to publish a consultation paper later this year in the White Paper "Building Businesses ... Not Barriers".

I agree that radical reform is needed. While development plans are seen by many as an important safeguard against arbitrary development control decisions, the present system is generally acknowledged to be too slow and overburdened with unnecessary detail. The present two-tier system of county structure plans and local plans prepared by the Districts is confusing, and structure plans increasingly duplicate the role of local plans. The proposals in the enclosed paper are intended to deal with these problems while providing the essential framework for the exercise of development control.

The main proposal is to do away with structure plans and to move to a single-tier system of development plans in all parts of the country, as we are already doing in the metropolitan areas. This will mean that plan preparation is the sole responsibility of District councils, who are best placed to deal with most planning issues and who also deal with all planning applications except those relating to minerals and waste disposal. Having one-tier of development plans instead of two will considerably reduce the time needed to prepare plans and keep them up to date, and there are other proposals to speed up the procedures.

The proposals should be welcomed by the development industry and by the District councils. However, we must expect the County interests to object - at least initially. Their first reaction will be that abolishing structure plans will remove their main planning function. But the proposals retain a strong role for the



county, in helping to formulate regional planning guidance and in deciding policies on those matters that cannot be satisfactorily dealt with at the local level, such as Green Belts, land for housing, major industrial and retail development, and minerals and waste disposal. They would also have a new power to designate rural conservation areas.

The force of the County opposition may well diminish when they have taken in the full proposals. But the proposals will need to be carefully handled and presented. The strongest selling points are that we are simplifying the system and bringing planning closer to local people. I am due to address the Town and Country Planning School on 15 September and that would be a good platform to launch the proposals.

I enclose a copy of the draft consultation paper that has been prepared by my Department. Kenneth Baker wrote to Malcolm Rifkind and Nicholas Edwards giving them advance notice of the proposals, and I will now send them further details, since their Departments are responsible for planning matters. I am also writing to Willie Whitelaw, Norman Tebbit and David Young, but I would prefer to defer circulating the consultation paper to other departments until nearer the time of publication. If Willie Whitelaw agrees, it may well be possible to clear the consultation paper by correspondence with H Committee colleagues towards the end of next month. If they are then agreed, I will announce the main proposals on 15 September and publish the consultation paper the next day.

I would be grateful to know if you agree with the proposals as a basis for consultation and with the suggested arrangements for publishing them.

Copies of this go to Malcolm Rifkind, Nicholas Edwards and Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'NR'.

N R

23 July 1986

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

29 July 1986

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 23 July, and the minute from the Secretary of State for Scotland dated 28 July. The Prime Minister has agreed the proposals set out in your Secretary of State's minute as a basis for consultation, and with the suggested arrangements for publishing them. She hopes the consultative document will include a reference to the timetable for introducing the change.

I am copying this letter to Robert Gordon (Scottish Office), Colin Williams (Welsh Office) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Mark Addison

Robin Young, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

cc/b



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

Mark Addison Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

My ref:

Your ref:

1 August 1986

*W
4/V*

Dear Mark,

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Thank you for your letter of 29 July.

The draft consultation paper (paragraph 69) explains that these proposals will require legislation and the Secretary of State does not envisage that this could be until after the General Election, since the legislation would inevitably be fairly complex. The consultation paper also explains how the new system would then be implemented (paragraphs 99-101).

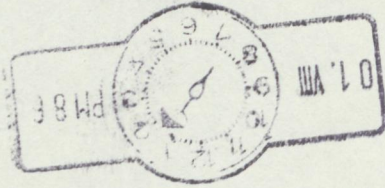
I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours sincerely

Brian Leonard

B H LEONARD
Private Secretary

Planning: LOCAL Gov. P43.





CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Secretary of State for the Environment has copied to me his minute to you of 23 July proposing changes to the development plan system. *WITH MEA*

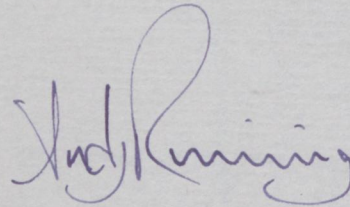
As he knows I do not at present see a need for major changes to the development plan system in Scotland. The first structure plan was only approved in Scotland in 1979 and the framework of structure and local plans is only now becoming established and widely understood. The structure plan process has not been abused by local authorities in Scotland to the same extent as it appears to have been in England and structure plan proposals are not taking nearly as long to make their way through the system. In part this may be because in large parts of Scotland the conflicting pressures for development and conservation are less strong than in the south of England. The system is not subject to general criticism from developers, although I would not claim that it is entirely free from the problems which the Sainsbury Group have drawn to your attention.

While therefore I am considering some form of review of the effectiveness of the system in Scotland and I shall follow with interest the progress of the consultations proposed in England I do not intend to bring forward proposals for dispensing with structure plans in Scotland. Among the other proposals put forward by the Secretary of State for the Environment I am attracted by the measures to simplify local plan procedures and propose to carry out parallel consultations on these. The proposals for statutory rural conservation areas on the other hand do

not seem to me to be necessary in Scotland, where the planning controls in rural areas are already organised differently from those in England.

I do not think that on this issue a different approach in Scotland will cause particular difficulty south of the Border and the Secretary of State for the Environment is content.

I am copying this minute to the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Employment, the Secretary of State for Wales and Sir Robert Armstrong.



11

M R

28 July 1986

Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence

LOCAL GOVT

PLANNING

P. T. 3

Prime Minister:

The DOE minute is attached. Agree to welcome the proposals as recommended
25 July 1986

PRIME MINISTER

In September we must have a full meeting on this topic or off

FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Recap

What happened to the one intended for decision (for - 25/77)
Policy Unit

You will recall the horrors of structure plans, slow to devise, nit picking in their effect and set in bureaucratic concrete. Increasingly becoming barriers to economic regeneration, structure plans had become breeding grounds for bureaucraziness. Everything was included in them from nuclear free zones to the siting of picnic places, and the banning of old people's homes in some areas.

The Proposal

DoE propose to put structure plans in the governmental waste disposal site, and they go further. The following are the main features of the suggestion:

- a. Instead of county-structure and local development plans, a single development plan would be prepared by district planning authorities. There will be a new rôle for the counties and regions in preparing guidance. Hopefully, this is a face-saving exercise to staunch the flow of invective from county planning officers who see their empires diminished.

- b. Moves to simplify and cut down planning categories of all sorts that may be included in these plans.
- c. Moves to speed up the whole process. At the moment, agreeing plans takes, on average, nearly 2 years.

Conclusion

You may want to welcome these refreshing signs that your impetus through the Sainsbury Group is finally having some effect deep inside DoE. One omission, however, which should be brought to your attention is the current absence of any proposal to set a time limit for the implementation of the proposals in this paper. Indeed, it is suggested that existing approved structure plans and adopted local plans would remain in force until replaced in whole or in part by the new county policy statements and district plans. This potentially is a nightmare. In order to avoid this situation, we need to set out clearly when the new simplified régime is to come into effect and when all the old cobwebs are to be swept aside. We have brought this to the attention of DoE officials.

HB.

HARTLEY BOOTH

PRIME MINISTER

You looked at this submission from Mr. Ridley, and Hartley Booth's comments, over the weekend. This prompted you to ask where matters had got to with Godfrey Bradman's concerns about planning delays in South Hampshire. I have put a separate note on that point into your box tonight.

Could I check that you are content for Mr. Ridley to proceed with the reform of structure plans, as recommended by Hartley? We shall certainly set up a further meeting on planning, and with the Sainsbury Group, in September if we can.

Yes

*Lillian
(Garden Rooms)*

p.p. MARK ADDISON

28 July 1986

CEBS



Y GWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
01-233 7172 (Llinell Union)

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 7172 (Direct Line)

Oddi wrth yr Is-Ysgrifennydd Senneddol

From The Parliamentary Under-Secretary

NBM

5 August 1986

Dear Nicholas,

RG

file into mem
↓
PPS

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

I have seen your minute to the Prime Minister of 23 July and the draft consultation paper, as well as your letters to Willie Whitelaw and Malcolm Rifkind. I am replying in Nick's absence.

First of all we warmly welcome the objectives of the exercise and the major elements of the proposals. These should take us a good way in the direction of simplifying and shortening the far too protracted processes of plan preparation and approval. With regard to the suggested abolition of structure plans, we are not at all worried about giving up the 'approval' role (the Regional Guidelines and our reserve powers should safeguard the wider interest); but like you, we do foresee strong objections from the counties who will view the move as a diminution of their planning function. That will have to be faced, however, but there are some elements in the package which will soften the blow as far as the counties are concerned.

Within the broad proposals, there are a few areas of concern and some points of clarification which I will take this opportunity to raise.

Most important, I foresee a need to consider the imposition of strict timetables on each main stage of the process, namely Regional Guidelines, County Policies and District Plans, as otherwise the outcome could prove as long-winded and divorced from reality as the present system. I do think that this should at least be hinted at in the consultation paper. Secondly, I wonder whether an EIP-type procedure will prove appropriate for the public consideration of County Planning Policies when the objective is to divest them of their 'development plan' status. It is hard to see where the difference lies in practical casework terms, especially in the eyes of the lay participants, between the development plan and the 'adopted' Planning Policies.

/ I do not foresee

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



I do not foresee many difficulties about producing Regional Guidelines in Wales, as we are already fairly well provided with Ministerial statements, circulars and agency programmes. We would need to think through how we should go about eliciting local authority advice on the preparation of the Guidelines. In that respect we would like to reserve our position on the question of standing conferences or the like for the time being.

Finally, I would ask for some specific attention to be paid in the consultation paper to plan or policy making in the National Parks in view of their importance in Wales. To date, the counties have enjoyed a well established role in these areas. We are already effecting the extension of illustrative maps in the consultation paper to cover Wales and we would also expect some of the statistics in the paper to reflect our experience. My officials will be in touch with yours on this. With regard to the consultation exercise in Wales, we feel strongly that this should be conducted by the Welsh Office.

/ I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and to Willie Whitelaw, Malcolm Rifkind and Sir Robert Armstrong.

MARK ROBINSON

Local Govt Planning



1970
1971
1972



Mark Robinson Esq MP
Welsh Office
Gwydyr House
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

11 August 1986

Dear Mark

NBPM.

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

attmap

Thank you for your letter of 5 August. I am grateful for your support for the objectives of the exercise and the main proposals.

I also share your concern to avoid the excessive delays in preparing plans which occurred when the present system was introduced. There would, however, be difficulties in imposing a strict timetable for all plans. The urgency of the need for a new plan will vary with local circumstances. Where the structure plan has been recently approved and there are up-to-date local plans it would be wasteful to require them to be replaced quickly with new plans. I suggest that instead of a strict timetable we ensure that the legislation would allow the Secretary of State to direct a local authority to prepare a plan by a specified date. That could then be used selectively if any authorities dragged their feet too much.

On your second point, I understand your concern about not making statements of County policies seem too much like structure plans. In practice I do not think they will be. They will be much less elaborate documents covering fewer subjects. However I think it will be important to ensure that the policies in them are open to the sort of independent scrutiny which an examination in public will allow. But if this raises problems I will certainly look at it again. On that understanding I hope you will agree that the reference should remain in the consultation paper.

I take your point about National Parks and will make it clear in the consultation paper that we do not propose any change in the arrangement under which the National Park authority is responsible for preparing the development plan. My officials will be in touch with yours to agree suitable changes to make this clear and to take on board the other small points you mention.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, Malcolm Rifkind and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Robinson
N Ridley

NICHOLAS RIDLEY

LOCAL GOVT Planning Control PT3

CCBS



Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
01-233 6106 (Linell Union)

Oddi wrth Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 6106 (Direct Line)

From The Secretary of State for Wales

THE RT HON NICHOLAS EDWARDS MP

21 August 1986

De Nu

mu

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Thank you for your letter of 11 August to Mark Robinson. I was pleased to read that you were able to adapt the consultation paper in some of the directions we had indicated, and I am now happy for it to go forward to H Committee in its revised form.

/ I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, Malcolm Rifkind and Sir Robert Armstrong.

[Handwritten signature]

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

LOCAL GOVT
PLANNING
PT3

1001

