CAB/LP
A A

PRIME MINISTER 23 October 1986

MEETING ON 27 OCTOBER WITH SIR JOHN SAINSBURY'S GROUP

Further to your meeting of 29 April and 9 December 1985 with Sir John Sainsbury's Group, the Committee and DoE now report back to you on its proposals to simplify, clarify and expedite Town and Country Planning Law. Attending your meeting at 15.00 hours will be:

Sir John Sainsbury, Chairman & Chief Executive of J Sainsbury plc
Clifford Chetwood, Chairman & Chief Executive of George Wimpey plc
Mr Christopher Benson, Vice Chairman & Managing Director of MEPC plc, Chairman, London Docklands
Mr Nigel Mobbs, Chairman & Chief Executive of Slough Estates plc, Chairman of the PSA Advisory Board
Mr Idris Pearce, Managing Partner of Richard Ellis, Surveyors
Mr Roger Stoddards, Senior Partner of Last Studdards, Solicitors
Sir John Taylor, Partner of Chapman, Taylor & Co

Nicholas Ridley
William Waldegrave
David Young
~~**David Trippier**~~
Michael Howard
(Despite your suggestion, Nicholas Ridley prefers officials do not attend on this occasion.)

Progress and way ahead

Following your meeting with the Group on 25 April 1986 and your two meetings last year, considerable progress is

again reported by Nicholas Ridley, which we set out below. He suggests that we use his progress headings as an agenda which we adopt.

1. **Main Issues for Consideration**

a. The handling of planning appeals.

b. Future of structure plans.

c. Planning and jobs.

d. Disposal of public land.

e. Enterprise zones.

a. The handling of planning appeals: the median decision time has crept down from 23 weeks to 19 weeks over the last 2 years. Inside this figure is the better statistic that 86% of appeals are decided within 8 weeks, a very considerable improvement on 1984. The message that is clearly put by DoE is that only the increased volume of planning appeals has stopped them making more progress. We still think there is a strong case for you to keep up the pressure on DoE. It is still possible for much more radical solutions to be put through, especially by your new team of Ministers. Among these radical solutions that we would suggest you consider are either: a) restricting the planning decision procedure so that only 1 person checks through the Inspector's report before it is transmitted to the appellant; or b) in all except a tiny category of strategically important cases, allowing the Inspector to decide at the end of the appeal or within a few days of the appeal what the outcome of the appeal should be. This would model the planning system on the judicial

system but would save the few strategic cases for the Secretary of State's personal decision.

b. Structure plans: radical proposals to remove structure plans are now being well developed. Nicholas Ridley states these cannot be introduced until after a General Election. At least, following your intervention last time, DoE have taken the point that such a new system should be implemented promptly after a General Election. You might think it appropriate to welcome this.

c. Planning and jobs: although it is stated that a robust line must be pursued, and that a sensible distinction between use of land in the countryside and use of urban land is made, nevertheless, no new policy is suggested to encourage greater use of derelict urban land through the planning system. You may well consider that, in addition to the presumption in favour of planning permission which you will recall we put out on 16 July 1985, we might well achieve speedier use of derelict land in these areas if we underline this presumption making it a compelling presumption that planning permission would be granted for anyone proposing to use derelict land in designated areas. We suggest that you might fly this one at the Sainsbury Group. This, of course, would be in another circular which is not binding. If you wanted to go further, we could legislate to allow deemed planning consent in certain designated areas where there was dereliction.

Disposal of public land

d. Here at last there is something that you have wanted for some time. DoE are asking for new powers to be included in the Local Government Bill, this Session, to compel many more sales of unused public sector land.

The Sainsbury Group would be invaluable here, to pore over the fine tuning of the Government's proposal to check that they feel that it is going to achieve our desired objective. Sainsbury have also suggested that there should be incentives to sell. DoE state that this infringes our policy on the controls on local authority capital expenditure. You may be told by Idris Pearce that, in respect of NHS land, the sale of unused land has been strongly motivated by the power given to NHS to keep and spend the proceeds of sale.

e. Enterprise zones: Sir John Sainsbury, who I recently met, may voice the committee's distrust of enterprise zones, but will support simplified planning zones. We also feel that simplified planning zones are much cheaper than E.Zs.

2. **The Future of the Group**

This time DoE are not suggesting that the Group closes down.

3. **Handling**

In the pre-meeting of Ministers between 14.30 and 15.00, you might agree with Nicholas Ridley that we need radical solutions to remove delays in planning appeals. You might enquire why, after you and the committee have asked several times that DoE have failed to give a proper timetable of how and where cases take so long in being decided. (Confidentiality could be preserved). Sir John is upset about this. He wants to have the evidence that particular urgent cases are sitting in in-trays or filing cabinets for months on end. His specific request has several times been sidestepped.

You might mention privately in the pre-meeting, but not at the main meeting, that Sir John is being criticised by his fellow directors for being involved in this committee because they believe they now have evidence that planning applications by Sainsbury plc are being slowed up by hostile officials. Obviously, this is a highly sensitive matter which Sir John is very reluctant to ventilate. However, he has passed on some information to me.

4. Conclusion

We recommend you encourage the Sainsbury Group to continue their good work. Pressure is still needed to reduce the time both in planning applications as well as planning appeals. At the moment, the consultation procedure before the application is off the ground may take months. One radical solution which we recommend is to require the applicant to advertise his application as an alternative to consultation. (This has the backing of a group of senior planning silks that we have consulted.) We also need to revise the Planning Procedure Rules more speedily than we are doing (particularly rule 6). We still have all to go for in the reduction of planning appeals themselves. We recommend that allowing the Inspector to decide planning appeal at the end of the case, except in a reduced number of cases that should be referred to the Secretary of State, would assist considerably.

The main message is that good work is being done. You will find a list of sensible improvements at the end of Nicholas Ridley' s minute. Pressure must be maintained to keep up the good work.

HARTLEY BOOTH

SRWALH

PRIME MINISTER

SAINSBURY GROUP MEETING: MONDAY 27 OCTOBER

You have a half-hour briefing meeting at 1430 with the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Employment, William Waldegrave (Environment) and Richard Howard (DTI).

The Secretary of State for the Environment has provided a note summarising the current position on the key items at Flag B. He met Sir John Sainsbury this week (after writing his first minute) and has provided a supplementary note at Flag C. Lord Young's note at Flag D addresses the balance between economic and environmental objectives in planning policies. A steering brief from Hartley Booth is at Flag A.

The key points for discussion are

- planning applications and appeals: why there are so many, and why they take so long;

- structure plans: the problem now is how quickly the new system can be introduced;

- the future of the group: this is the first meeting for Mr. Ridley who has therefore asked not to include officials. There is no longer any suggestion of abolishing the group but you will want to consider how it should work in future.

The meeting with the Sainsbury Group itself starts at 1500. You may wish to ask the Environment Secretary to open the meeting with a description of recent developments, and then seek Sir John's comments.

PBB

(P.A. BEARPARK)
24 October 1986

cc Mr. Fountain

MR. TAYLOR

MONDAY 27 OCTOBER: SAINSBURY GROUP

Sir John Sainsbury, Clifford Chetwood, Christopher Benson, Nigel Mobbs, Idris Pearce, Roger Stoddards and Sir John Taylor are to meet the Prime Minister and various Ministers at 1500. Could they please be allowed to meet (in the small dining room?) from 1415 until the 1500 meeting which I gather is usually in the Cabinet Room.

(P. A. BEARPARK)
24 October 1986

ce FDoor

The Chairman's office

SAINSBURY'S

J Sainsbury plc
Stamford House
Stamford Street
London SE1 9LL

01-921 6000

Telex 264241

A. Bearpark Esq.,
No 10 Downing Street,
LONDON SW1

24th October, 1986

Dear Mr Bearpark,

Thank you for arranging a room for the Planning Group to use at 2.15 p.m. on Monday, 27th October, prior to their meeting with the Prime Minister at 3.00 p.m.

I am attaching a list of car registrations for use by your security people.

Yours sincerely,

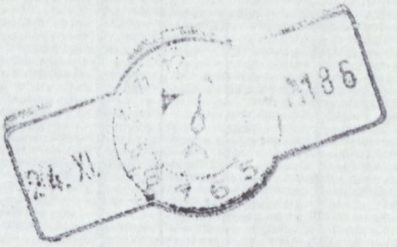
Felicity Saunders

Miss Felicity Saunders
Secretary

Att.

REGISTRATION NUMBERS OF CARS ARRIVING FOR 2.15 p.m. MEETING AT DOWNING STREET, MONDAY 27th OCTOBER, 1986

Sir John Sainsbury	Granada B204 YUV
Sir Nigel Mobbs	Rolls A203 XRD
Christopher Benson	Jaguar A277 LLF
Clifford Chetwood	Granada C500 XFX
Idris Pearce	Mercedes ATB 12Y
John Taylor	BMW D880 YLW
Roger Suddards	By taxi


24. XI.
1886

BF

HARTLEY BOOTH

The Sainsbury Group is fixed for 1430 on Monday 27 October. I should be grateful for your assistance with briefing in due course.

ANDY BEARPARK
16 September 1986

FILE CAJ

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

16 September 1986

BF

THE SAINSBURY GROUP

I am writing to confirm that the timing of the next meeting has been changed to 1430 on Monday 27 October, with the industrialists joining the meeting at 1500.

Could I please leave it to you to inform the members of the group, and arrange the agenda and briefing.

I am copying this letter to John Turner (Department of Employment), Barbara Jones (William Waldegrave's office), Paul Madden (Department of Trade and Industry) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

P. A. BEARPARK

Robin Young, Esq.,
Department of the Environment

EC

ANDY BEARPARK

SAINSBURY GROUP

I have fixed this meeting for Monday 27 October. The meeting of Ministers (Secretary of State for the Environment, Secretary of State for Employment, William Waldegrave from DOE and Michael Howard from DTI) will commence at 1430 and the industrialists will join the group at 1500.

I told the people on the link-up that you would be writing to them with an agenda. I have done nothing about getting hold of the industrialists.

CAROLINE RYDER
16 September 1986

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

10 September 1986

THE SAINSBURY GROUP

The Prime Minister has agreed that the next meeting of the Group should be on Wednesday 5 November from 0900 to 1100. I should be grateful if you could now start to make the necessary arrangements.

I am copying this letter to John Turner (Department of Employment), Paul Madden (Department of Trade and Industry) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

P.A. Bearpark

Robin Young Esq
Department of the Environment.

Doc etc upon
of 2 weeks on
PSB
15/9

PRIME MINISTER

THE SAINSBURY GROUP

You agreed that the next meeting should be in November. Although your diary is filling up I think this is one thing you do want to do.

Content with Wednesday 5 November from 9 to 11?

PSB

Yes ms

P. A. Bearbpark
5 September 1986

CB
PL of Sainsbury Group plus
1/9. MGA 8/8

MR. BOOTH

SAINSBURY GROUP

On the basis of the advice in your minute of 30 July to me, the Prime Minister has decided to stick with a November date for the next meeting of the Group.

Would you please let the appropriate people in DOE know. I will bring forward the papers at the beginning of next month so that we can fix the meeting finally, having agreed a date.

Mark Addison

Mark Addison

6 August 1986

Mr Addison

I have notified John Delafons Office in DoE
6th August '86
[illegible]

DG2BHW

E.R.

CR
PPS please.

1

PRIME MINISTER

MEA.
Ring me
discuss pl.
CR.

THE SAINSBURY GROUP

You said you would like to bring forward the date of the next Sainsbury Group meeting from November to September.

DOE would be content to advance the date to late September. Hartley has, however, now spoken to Sir John Sainsbury who believed quite strongly that early November was the first time that a valuable meeting could sensibly be held. This was in part because of the need to await the outcome of work in hand, but also because of the practical difficulties of getting the Group together before then.

Agree that the next meeting should be in November? Or would you prefer to advance it?

November
MT

Mark Addison

Mark Addison

31 July 1986

DG2BHM

MR ADDISON 30 July 1986

THE SAINSBURY GROUP

Sir John Sainsbury phoned this morning and made two points. He would come to an earlier meeting if the Prime Minister called one, but was quite strongly of the view that an early date in November would be the first time a valuable meeting could be held. Two reasons for this were that various work had been commissioned and would not be fully digested before late October/early November. Secondly there was a logistics questions of getting the group together.

I think on balance the Sainsbury meeting should be scheduled for the first week in November or at the earliest the last in October.

Sgd CR

HARTLEY BOOTH

Cards.
Please. Table we could fit in 2 hours a day Monday 29 September?

MR ADDISON

29 July 1986

THE SAINSBURY GROUP

Yes - time
afternoon
14.30-15.30 will do - let me know?
OK.

I had a word with DoE officials, who say that there is some point in having a Sainsbury meeting in the last few days of September, or possibly the first few days in October. The Agenda would cover development plans and the proposals that the Prime Minister saw last weekend. Secondly, it would cover appeals and John Delafons' new ideas which include charging for appeals. This charge would be refundable by the local planning authority, and would present an incentive to the LPA to act more responsibly and not to refuse appeals unjustifiably. John Delafons will report that as there has been a 20% rise in planning appeals, he has not been able to meet the objective for this year. Thirdly, the agenda could cover disposal of surplus land. Here, the Sainsbury Group and DoE are planning legislation to create a duty on local authorities and public sector land hoarders to sell surplus land.

The next meeting of the Sainsbury Group will, as you recall, be widened to include John Delafons himself. You will remember that the Prime Minister suggested this. In addition, it is suggested that the Senior Chief Planning Inspector (Miss Harran) attend the meeting. I strongly support her presence. Some home truths can be brought to her attention; though it is fair to point out that she may well be the bearer of a manpower request.

HARTLEY BOOTH

MR BOOTH

THE SAINSBURY GROUP

The note from the Secretary of State for the Environment on the future of development plans prompted the Prime Minister to ask for a full meeting on all outstanding planning matters in September. As you know, it was agreed at the last Sainsbury Group meeting to fix the next one in November. It may be worth trying to bring that forward a month or two. I should be grateful for your advice on this, after you have had a word with DOE officials.

(MARK ADDISON)

29 July 1986