

PRIME MINISTER

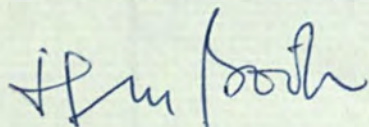
28 February 1985

PLANNING INQUIRIES

Instead of the root and branch reform of planning enquiry procedure for which you hoped, H have agreed more modest proposals to make existing procedure work better. A working party is to look at Planning Enquiry Procedure Rules and another group is to look at whether potential objectors might be paid more compensation sooner. The proposal includes:

- that inspectors should be encouraged to be more robust in cutting out irrelevance and rejecting repetitious evidence;
- that expert witness reports should be taken as read. This would have saved more than a quarter of the time at the Sizewell Inquiry;
- that inspectors should timetable hearings and sort out the issues in a pre-inquiry review.

We recommend this solution as sensible and one which is unlikely to require legislation. However, we recommend that you also endorse the comments of Nicholas Edwards at H, that much of the unnecessary delay occurs after the planning inquiry at departmental level. Our research shows that this is a serious, continuing, if reduced, problem.

HARTLEY BOOTH