

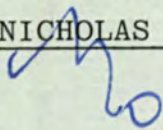
MR TURNBULL

6 January 1984

MISS COLEMAN'S WORK

I go along with the Department of Environment verdict on Miss Coleman's work. Having read two of her articles on land use my impression is that her work reflects her own value judgements about how the landscape should look (tidy, compact towns, with plenty of urban-infill, and an uninterrupted agricultural farming landscape), backed up with dire predictions (total loss of farmland in 200-400 years) based on naive extrapolation. It is reassuring that the Department of Environment take a more balanced view.

NICHOLAS OWEN





Prime Minister <sup>(2)</sup>  
To note. Agree we  
take no further?

AT  
6/1

2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB  
01-212 3434

My ref: J/PSO/17895/83

Your ref:

37/1

NO

6/1/84

5 January 1984

Dear Andrew

You asked in your letter of 19 December about the work of Dr Alice Coleman. In fact my Secretary of State thinks that it was probably Sir Keith Joseph who mentioned Dr Coleman's work to the Prime Minister.

Dr Coleman's main interest in the last few years has been in the design of local authority housing. Here she and her research team have done a lot of work on what she terms "design disadvantage" - that is, features of multi-storey blocks that she believes result in both deterioration of the environment and social problems. The four main indicators that she has used are litter, graffiti, dog detritus and the number of children in care.

She attributes these problems to design features and in this her findings are similar to those of earlier research. She does not, however, take sufficient account of the effects of housing management practices that tend to concentrate problem families in this type of property. Her work in this field has been supported by a grant from the Rowntree Trust that has recently run out. Mr Gow had a talk with her last month and encouraged her to write up the results of her work for publication, but he concluded that it was of more limited value than the broader based work that the Department has done on both the design and management of problem council estates.

Dr Coleman's earlier work has been in the area of land utilisation surveys and derelict land, where she has been active for many years. She has argued that planning controls have not been restrictive enough and have allowed more land to be developed than was needed. Much of her findings, however, were based on land-use statistics that relate to the pre-war period, before the present planning system was in operation, and her conclusions have been discounted by other researchers (notably Dr Best of Wye Agriculture College) whose data and statistical methods are much more soundly based.

Dr Coleman is much respected for her life's work in the field of land-use and environmental studies, but its limitations are apparent. She also lends support to the extreme "conservationist" attitudes towards the use and development of land. For these reasons we could not recommend her as a source of authoritative advice on these matters.

Yours sincerely

John Baker

A H DAVIS

Private Secretary

MANPOWER: Strategy for Industry  
and Employment: Feb 83.

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19 December, 1983

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Planning Controls

Your Secretary of State recently commended to the Prime Minister the work of Miss Alice Coleman of King's College on the impact of planning controls and approvals. I would be grateful if you could provide us with further details, your views on whether the Prime Minister ought to see this work for herself, and suggestions on how this might be done.

I am copying this letter, for information, to Barnaby Shaw, whose Secretary of State is also familiar with Miss Coleman's work.

ANDREW TURNBULL

John Ballard, Esq.,  
Department of the Environment

RW