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28 November 1984

PRIME MINISTER

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING SYSTEM - MEETING WITH
SIR JOHN SAINSBURY, MONDAY, 10 DECEMBER 1984

Purpose of the Meeting

Sir John's business has suffered from undue planning delays; and from what he sees as bad planning decisions, particularly for his superstores.

You could welcome Sir John's aims of simpler and speedier planning.

You could say that Patrick Jenkin will take on board the good ideas from the Sainsbury report but that he does have to think about balancing conservation interests, the maintenance of the green belt and the overall framework of planning law.

You might then ask Sir John to introduce his report.

It does not make a root and branch attack against existing town and country planning law, but argues for a number of piecemeal improvements. There is, for example, no challenge to the structure and local plans that are sometimes too complex and constraining. The summary of Sir John's recommendations are on pages 3-5 of his report.

Patrick Jenkin will want to reply: his brief shows how much has been done. The Annex to his paper lists achievements of the Government since 1979: the Local Government Planning and Land Act, 1980 which went some way to simplifying development land procedures; the General Development Order, 1981 which allowed a range of developments without a specific planning application, including factory extensions, home extensions and change of use in certain circumstances; the creation of new enterprise zones; the Secretary of State only decides 5% of planning applications, considerably fewer than in 1979.

Patrick's report is bullish, but we feel there is much to be done and that delays are still far too long.

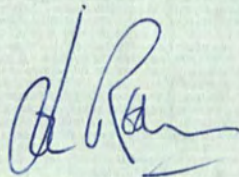
After the two opening statements, you might take the specific recommendations summarised in paragraph 2.6 of Sir John's paper as an agenda for the meeting, with the aim of making the discussion as specific as possible.

Conclusion

You may wish to sum up by reaffirming our common cause on speeding up planning procedures.

You could agree that the Government will restate the basic presumption that an applicant is entitled to planning permission when a good case is made against it, and ask Patrick to arrange for his Department to pursue the specific proposals.

You might finish by suggesting that a detailed reply should be prepared on the report which could, if desired, provide the basis for a further meeting.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Redwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

JOHN REDWOOD