



Planning Bulletin

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TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ASSOCIATION

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HARLOW GROWTH CUT, BUT GREEN BELT SUFFERS Harlow Development Corporation has reacted to public opposition inside and outside the new town by cutting back its expansion proposals and almost halving the acreage to be taken up by new housing. This is the main feature of revised proposals submitted to Mr. Rippon, Secretary of State for the Environment, and published on 1st August. The changes are unlikely to satisfy many of the objectors from surrounding villages affected by the expansion. They leave the suggested new boundary drawn as widely as in the corporation's April proposals; they still involve the building of about 11,000 new houses; and expansion will still bite hard into the thin Green Belt between Harlow and the edge of London. Mr. Bernard Perkins, the corporation's chairman, explaining the revised proposals, said there had been three main points of criticism. The first was that the expansion was too big. They had sought to meet this by suggesting to the Minister that 125,000 should be the ultimate population, not 150,000. The second criticism was that they were providing too many houses for sale and not enough to rent. The corporation suggested an initial 50-50 split. The third main criticism was that the expansion was extending the town's boundaries too widely. That criticism they could not satisfy. It had been suggested that the green wedges within the town should be built up, but this was unacceptable. What the revised proposals do is draw back the area of housing development closer to the existing town. On the sensitive southern side near Rye Hill, this cuts out all development except for a few hundred low density homes near to the existing Stewards neighbourhood. To the east the scale is also reduced (now about 2,500 homes). In the west, where the biggest impact and the strongest opposition are, the new proposals mean an edging back of the main development (now about 7,500 houses) from some of the more sensitive areas, especially Roydon Village, which the corporation suggests should be a conservation area and by-passed. Low density development (again five to eight houses per acre) at Nursery Hill and Hallsgreen is seen as a "tidying up operation" on existing sporadic development. An important effect of the revision is that the traditional Harlow pattern of clustered neighbourhoods separated by green wedges will be retained, and their reasonably direct access to the town centre secured. (Times 1/8)

CONCERN AT LOSS OF GREEN BELT Local authorities in the South-east are becoming increasingly concerned that the Government may undermine the region's strategy and long-accepted planning principles for short-term housing gain. The problem is particularly acute over the Home Counties Green Belt, from which councils have been asked to select 2,000 acres for future development. However, even now the Department of the Environment is nibbling quietly away with decisions to allow house-building on this semi-sacrosanct territory after the due process of the public inquiry. Only this week, the planning chairman of Hertfordshire, Mr. Bryan Draper, accused the Government of ad-hoc decisions which could turn the Green Belt into a "speculators' paradise". In 1972, a total of 59 acres had been released by the Minister after appeal, of which 35.2 acres were allowed for development in spite of the inspector's recommendation to the contrary. This year up to the end of May, the figures were 46.7 and 37.5 acres, he said. More than 71 appeals were still in the pipeline affecting 520 acres. At a recent meeting of the Standing Conference on London and South-east Regional Planning, the figures for the Home Counties showed that the Department of the Environment had eaten into 138 acres of approved and 145 acres of proposed Green Belt, since 1970. The totals included 253 acres in Bedfordshire, 62 acres in Berkshire, 39 in Buckinghamshire, 22 acres in Essex and 64.5 acres in Surrey. The present regional strategy,

which follows on years of faith in Green Belt and satellite new towns, concentrates urban growth in major centres of economic and social activity. The strategy does not lose its validity because of short-term fluctuations such as a surge in housing land prices, says a report to the Conference. A further technical report suggests that, although population forecasts are being revised downwards, there may still be the need for about the same amount of urban growth points in the region. (Guardian 3/8)

GREEN BELT "WATCHDOGS" REQUIRED As the number of planning applications increases, particularly in the Green Belt, the Council for the Protection of Rural England is trying to persuade at least two people in each country community to take on the unpaid job of village "watchdog". They will be trained to understand the jargon of planning applications and use their knowledge of the area to see if the plans are likely to damage beauty spots, historic buildings, woods or landmarks. "The only qualifications required are intelligence and a love of the countryside", said a spokesman for the Council. "These people would be extremely useful, particularly in the South-east where Green Belt areas are now being threatened".

(Daily Telegraph 26/7)

WELWYN MOTORWAY SECTION OPENING The £2m. $3\frac{3}{4}$ mile section of the A1(M) motorway at Welwyn is to be opened on August 10th - nine months ahead of schedule. Three thousand vehicles an hour are expected on the six-lane motorway. With the opening of the section the whole 17 mile length of the A1 from Stanborough, just north of Hatfield, to the county boundary will be accorded motorway status. (Financial Times 2/8)

MOVE TO BRING JOBS TO RURAL AREAS Community workers in Cumberland are to examine ways of encouraging the growth of small business or cooperative ventures to counter the effects of long-term unemployment. A report on the first phase of a Home Office-supported community development project in the county says many people believe that industrial development policy has done little to encourage labour-intensive local firms. The report identifies the depressed economic situation of West Cumberland, with associated job shortages, underemployment and low wages, as the "core problem" of the project's target area, the parishes of Cleator Moor and Arlecdon and Frizington. Without more work and a greater variety of jobs, particularly for men, and a growth of economic activity, it says that "many social and economic problems can only be temporarily patched up". The community development project team, one of 12 being sponsored jointly by the Home Office and local authorities in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods spread across the country, is undertaking a detailed study of the nature of unemployment in the area to discover what skills the unemployed have and how many are unable or unwilling to find work.

(Guardian 31/7)

MAIL COACH HELPS TO SOLVE SURREY TRANSPORT PROBLEM A Royal Mail bus will start a new route today, carrying fare-paying passengers as well as letters and parcels for delivery. The Post Office is introducing the route in cooperation with Surrey County Council to run between Dorking, Coldharbour and Ockley. It will provide a badly needed service for local residents while at the same time collecting and delivering mail. It is only the second post bus in use in the South-east - the other operates near Canterbury - and the first within the London postal area. The post bus system has been operating for just over a year, and so far there are nine other routes, all in more remote areas; six in Scotland, one in Devon, one in Wales and one in the Lake District. (Times 6/8)

SEVERE CUT IN HOMES FROM HOUSING GROUPS Increases in house prices and building costs in 1972 caused a severe cut in the number of new homes provided in London by housing associations. A report published on 2nd August by the London Housing Associations Committee showed that the decline was at its worst in west London which has some of the worst housing conditions. In Hammersmith housing associations provided 11 new homes through conversion and improvement last year, compared with 169 in 1971; in Westminster the number dropped from 265 to 70 and in Kensington and Chelsea from 202 to 78. (Times 3/8)

COUNCIL CUT LAND FOR BSC IN HUNTERSTON DEVELOPMENT Ayrshire County Council decided on 31st July to limit the amount of land that should go to the

British Steel Corporation at Hunterston. The council decided unanimously to promote a compulsory purchase order to acquire 242 acres of the 2,200 acre site for a marine ore terminal, ore-stocking area and associated works. The order will require the approval of the Secretary of State for Scotland. A move to ask the Secretary of State to reject applications for refineries by Italian and American groups was heavily defeated. The British Steel Corporation had originally applied for a compulsory purchase order for 1,360 acres on the peninsula, but the county council decided that 1,100 acres should come under the county council. Yesterday's meeting decided to acquire it. It was revealed that the BSC had tried to purchase the land at a cost of almost £4.25m before applying for a compulsory purchase order. The county council made it clear that they were totally against the Hunterston development company being involved in the financing, construction and management and operation of the ore terminal. The county council said it was not desirable and it was not in the public interest. (Times 1/8)

WHAT TO READ

For the second time in four months the American vehicle-pollution laws have been postponed: Charles Cook explains the standards and the reasons for their unpopularity, in the Guardian (1/8). Perhaps Japan will be more successful with its own proposed anti-pollution laws, described in the Guardian (2/8).

Judy Hillman in the Guardian (1/8) finds hidden facts behind the 1973 House Building Statistics (the worst since 1963), pointing to the increase in improvement and renovation statistics that must be included to give a real picture of the housing stock. In the Scotsman (1/8) Anthony Pledger reports on the Ross and Cromarty housing problem, a situation based on shortage of building skills and materials, and requiring a steady construction programme for many years to overcome this problem. The homeless receive more attention in the "Public Services" feature of the Guardian (1/8), in which R. Beard shows that moving home for new opportunities outside London can undermine the relationship between the needy and the local authorities. A table showing the 1968 - 1974 House Completions was published in the Financial Times (1/8) on P.11.

A report of the difficulties being experienced with Lambeth's neighbourhood Councils project is given by John Ardill in the Guardian (4/8). This important project is being closely watched by other local authorities needing grass-roots organisations. It is even possible that such organisations will develop from the GLC's "crusade" against "deprived areas", a map showing the 22 boroughs so described appeared in the Evening News (1/8) alongside details of the crusade programme, which starts with housing advice centres and neighbourhood law centres. Meanwhile Ugandan Asians still living in transit camps in Kent and elsewhere are having communication problems, particularly the separated wives who have no English and no childhood training for independence. Their plight was examined on P.9 of the Guardian (6/8).

It is only shortage of space that prevents the "Planning Bulletin" from carrying full details of the Hunterston project in Scotland. The situation has reached a pre-battle stage, and readers may find details of the case in the Scotsman (2/8), the Times (6/8) in the "Industry in the Regions" feature, the Economist (4/8) P.72, and a map of the site on P.1 of the Scotsman (1/8). J.P. Mackintosh, MP, argues that there is a "case for leaving Scottish reform on the shelf" in the Times (1/8), even though the Scottish Local Government Bill should receive Royal Assent in the Autumn. The industry of the Western Isles formed the text for the "Regional Notebook" feature in the Times (6/8), though the North Sea oil review in the Financial Times (3/8) looked away from Scotland to the coast of Denmark. The Times (6/8) published the results of its opinion poll into attitudes towards local councils, councillors, corruption, publicity and planning powers. Juggernaut-suffering villages on the A2 (London - Dover) are to be by-passed according to the Times (4/8) report. The M54 (Telford - M6) is to go ahead despite the Inspector's contrary recommendation, according to the Guardian (4/8). Philp Jordon writes of the danger of using plastic in the building industry, following the Douglas tragedy, in the Guardian (4/8).

Reports of British investment in overseas land markets, especially Paris, attracted a report in the Financial Times (1/8) and a map in the Evening Standard (31/7), and in the Financial Times (4/8) a detailed report shows that the property men are threatening the Department Store Industry.

Places studied in depth included Bracknell, Sunderland and Chelmsford (Financial Times 31/7, 2/8 and 4/8), and European Energy Supplies were surveyed in the Financial Times (6/8).

Rights of way, footpaths and the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 form the subject of a case on P.149 of the Weekly Law Reports (27/7). In New Locations (June/July) articles on the attractions of Swindon, Northampton, Washington New Town, Peterborough and Telford appear, destined for the eyes of industrialists wanting to de-centralise. Articles in Nature in Focus (No. 14) describe wild animals and plants as indicators of environmental change, (recalling the Sunday Times' Lichen Survey). In Cry California (Summer) J.L. Hetland writes of "Progress Toward Regional Government" and P.O. Hanson writes on "Comprehensive Planning" from Sweden. In New Society (2/8) Peter Hall goes into the Maplin debate, with useful precis of the arguments, and a handy bibliography at the end. The Quarterly Newsletter (July) of the Midlands New Towns Society contains its views on the Staffordshire Structure Plan. The Architect (August) considers Leisure, both in terms of what is being done and how it should be done, and in terms of why we are organising for Leisure. The front cover of the Surveyor (3/8) asks "Ebenezer, where are you now?" in support of an article on the expansion of Harlow. Other articles include "Car Ownership in Greater London" and "A public transport performance model". The District Councils Review (Aug.) visits Snelsmore Common Country Park, and has an article by David Baker on the Historical Environment (Archaeology) and Local Government. Land and Liberty (July/August) devotes its editorial to "The Obsession with Betterment", criticising the TCPA statement on Land Values and Land Assembly. P.10 of Commerce International (August) sees David Crawford on the Development Prospects of Greater Europe. The RICS views on the Land Hoarding Charge are printed on P.753 of the Estates Gazette (4/8). The Architects' Journal (1/8) has been the only publication to pick up the significance of the decision on Mapledene, where Hackney Council have been prevented from pursuing a Comprehensive Development Area. The story is long but is worth pursuing: see P.229, then on to P.235. The English Text article in the Budapest Technical University Periodical Vol.17, No.1 - 2 is "Urban Development Models", and forms a useful summary of the concepts available. P.823 of the Local Government Chronicle (3/8) explains the National Health Service Reorganisation Act 1973.

DIARY DATES

- 23 - 25 September "Assessment of Environmental Quality". Residential Course at Reading University. 0734 861101.
- 6 - 17 October TCPA's own "General Planning Tour" of Britain including visits to examples of all types of British planning activity. Ring 01-930 8903/4/5.
- 10 October First of 10 weekly evening meetings on "Voluntary Groups and Urban Planning". City University, St. John Street, EC1V 4PB.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

- "Social Justice and the City". David Harvey. Edward Arnold. £3.25.
- "Threshold Analysis Manual". Scottish Development Dept. HMSO. £6.00.
- "Industrial Britain: The Humberside Region". Lewis and Jones. David and Charles. £2.25.
- "Action Group on London Housing: 3rd Interim Report". DOE. 20p.
- "Using Predictive Models for Structure Plans". DOE Welsh Office. HMSO. 65p.
- "Communities in Rural Lindsey: Consultative Draft". Lincoln County Planning Office. 90p.

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