CABINET

THE SOUTH-EAST STUDY: DRAFT WHITE PAPER

MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY, TRADE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With this note I am circulating a draft of a White Paper designed to be published at the same time as the South-East Study. The Study itself has been put before the Cabinet by the Minister of Housing and Local Government with C.P. (64) 37. The draft White Paper has been discussed by the Committee on Regional Development and reflects their conclusions, together with a more arresting final paragraph. The reference to new machinery to implement town expansions (paragraph 20), however, needs to be settled by the Cabinet.

Main Points

2. The Study by officials forecasts that the population in the South-East area (east of a line from the Wash to Dorset) is likely to increase by 31/2 million in the period 1961 to 1981. About 2-4 million will be excess of births over deaths, and 1-1 million will represent net inward migration from elsewhere in Britain and overseas. Together with the growing number of jobs in the London conurbation, especially office jobs in Central London, this presents a number of problems which call for fresh initiatives by the Government.

3. Given the guidance in the Study, most of this population growth can be looked after by local planning authorities, though they will need to make substantially increased allocations of land for building (for 2-2 1/2 million extra people) in their development plans. To relieve the problems which the London conurbation itself will present, the Study recommends also a programme of new and expanded towns, larger than at present, to take by 1981 1-1 1/2 million people. Some would be big enough and far away enough from London to act as important alternative centres for the growth which would otherwise take place around London itself.

Endorsement of Objectives

4. The Regional Development Committee agreed that these 20-year population forecasts, though necessarily subject to review, should be accepted as a realistic and indispensable basis for land use planning. It also agreed that new and expanded towns would be needed to take the 1-1 1/2 million, though it would be premature—in advance of public discussion and consultation with individual planning authorities—to decide where these expansions should take place. The draft White Paper endorses these points, but in paragraph 14 avoids any explicit acceptance at this stage of the concept of major alternative centres of growth.

Priority for Other Regions

5. The draft White Paper stresses that the priority the Government have already given to the development of Central Scotland and the North-East region of England is to be maintained. This will be done (paragraph 31) by determining the extent and location of public investment and industrial building, and phasing
the release of land for development in the South-East. The draft also (paragraph 32) mentions the other regional development studies now in progress. But it emphasises that planning in the South-East must start now.

Machinery of Implementation

6. Paragraph 20 of the draft White Paper explains that fresh machinery for carrying out new town expansion schemes in partnership with local authorities is contemplated. The Cabinet will wish to consider this paragraph in the light of their discussion of the Minister of Housing and Local Government's memorandum (C.P. (64) 45) on machinery.

Conclusion

7. I invite my Colleagues to agree that the Minister of Housing and Local Government and I shall jointly present a White Paper on the lines of the attached draft. Publication would take place before Easter, simultaneously with that of the South-East Study.

E. H.

Board of Trade, S.W. 1,
Report on South-East England

Presented to Parliament
by Command of Her Majesty
1964
1. Today, 18 million people—thirty-five out of every hundred in Great Britain—live in South-East England. In the last thirty years the population of the area has gone up by 3 million. During the next twenty years it is likely to increase by another 3½ million, mostly by the process of natural growth. Such a rate of increase creates major problems of land, housing, employment and transport. Their solution is of crucial importance, not only for the very large numbers of people who live and work in the South-East, but for the whole country. Much of our national prosperity depends on the prosperity of South-East England and the distribution of its population and employment must, therefore, be planned so as to promote its maximum efficiency. At the same time a balance must be kept between the growth of the South-East and the needs of other parts of the country.

2. The Government decided in 1961 to assess the land requirements of the whole South-East over the next 20 years, and to seek solutions for London’s problems over a wide front. The growth of population and employment in Greater London and the area it dominates had been much greater than could have been predicted when the post-war plans were prepared. The birth-rate had risen and was rising fast and the continuing decline in the average size of households meant that more homes were needed for the same number of people. London was in danger of choking. Much more land is required for its current needs, and for the future needs of the whole South-East.

3. The outcome of this decision by the Government is “The South-East Study”, a report by officials, published at the same time as this White Paper, with which it should be read. The Study covers the area south-east of a line from the Wash to Dorset. It is a comprehensive examination of the housing and land use problems of Greater London and the South-East during the period up to 1981.

4. The Study finds that nearly 2⅔ million of the expected 3½ million population increase in the South-East over the period 1961–1981 will be excess of births over deaths, and just over one million net inward migration from other parts of Great Britain, both for employment and for retirement, and from overseas. Further growth—probably at a higher rate so far as natural increase is concerned—is likely after 1981.

5. It is the Government’s intention to build up the prosperity of other parts of the country, and they are satisfied that the Study takes full account of this. They accept the Study as a reasonable assessment of the nature and scale of the South-East’s population problem. Population forecasts over a 20-year period are, inevitably, subject to a considerable margin of error and must therefore frequently be reviewed. This will be done; and the sample census already announced for 1966 is being devised with this in mind. Meanwhile the Government are satisfied that these population estimates provide a realistic basis for planning to meet future land needs.
6. **The Study's Proposals.** Much of the population growth in the South-East will be dealt with through the release of land by local planning authorities, followed by development, in the ordinary way. The amount of land allocated will have to be increased considerably in order to make proper provision for the expected growth. The Study suggests that such additional allocations should provide for 2-2½ million more people.

7. But the central problem of the South-East is disproportionate growth of population and employment in and around London. The Study examines three main approaches to this problem.

8. One possibility is to have no plan at all, in the hope that the situation would be self-correcting. This would mean that no attempt was made to influence the future pattern of growth in the South-East. Experience since the war, however, shows that, if things were left to take their course, too much of the population would continue to concentrate on London and the ring around it, thus creating ever more intractable problems of housing and road and rail transport. Such an approach would lead to increasing overcrowding and congestion in London, and to extreme pressure on the metropolitan green belt.

9. A second possibility would be to go on as at present. This would mean continuing with new towns and town expansions, of a moderate size, designed simply to provide accommodation for London's overspill population. This would indeed meet a pressing need, but would fail to prevent its recurrence. It would not solve the basic problem.

10. The Study suggests instead a third approach which should, in the course of time, alter the distribution of population growth in the South-East, and thus relieve the pressure on London and the surrounding countryside. This would be done through a fresh and much larger programme of new and expanded towns, the individual expansion schemes being on a bigger scale than those in the current programme. They would be centred on places well away from London.

11. For many years now the number of people living in the London conurbation has been falling, although the number of jobs has been rising. London, however, has a high birthrate and there will be many new households with a consequent increase in the demand for houses. But, although many more houses will be needed for Londoners, there is little undeveloped housing land left in the conurbation and, with the need to redevelop to modern standards, there will have to be an overspill of about one million during the Study period.

12. This overspill is included in the 3½ million net population growth of the South-East, all of which will have to be accommodated outside the London conurbation. The pattern of distribution over the next 20 years contemplated by the authors of the Study therefore is:

(i) The population of the London conurbation would by the end of the period be at about its present level—approximately 8 million.

(ii) Outside London, land for housing an additional 2-2½ million people would be provided by allocations in the development plans of the local planning authorities.
(iii) There would be a second generation of new and expanded towns planned on a large scale, to accommodate 1–$1\frac{1}{2}$ million people, well away from London.

13. The Government’s Initial Conclusions. The Government agree that the magnitude of the task in the South-East calls for further initiatives. To secure a better distribution of the inevitable growth, and to reduce the dominance of London, a radical change in the pattern of development is required. In the Government’s view, this can best be achieved if some of the population and employment increases which would otherwise take place in London and the congested metropolitan region are brought about in alternative centres of growth.

14. The Government, while not departing from their policy of channelling economic growth from the South-East to other parts of the country wherever possible, accept the basic objectives of the Study. Accordingly, they accept the need for new and expanded towns to accommodate 1–$1\frac{1}{2}$ million people, in ways which would provide effective relief for the pressures on London. Both private and public enterprise should contribute towards this programme.

15. The processes necessary to bring about this development will take some years: in the meantime development of Central Scotland and North-East England, to which the Government have given priority in public investment, will be going ahead.

16. Public opinion within and outside the South-East must have an opportunity to express itself before final decisions are taken. At this stage, therefore, the Government do not think it would be right to commit themselves to the selection of any particular place for expansion, or to the scale and rate of progress of expansion at any particular place.

17. The consequences of the Government’s initial conclusions. Acceptance of the broad objectives will have important implications for policy in a number of related fields. These fall into three categories:

(i) the pattern of development in the South-East;
(ii) problems of employment growth;
(iii) implications for the country as a whole.

THE PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH-EAST

18. Development Plans. In the South-East itself, the essence of the problem is the provision of more land. Local planning authorities will need to bring the land allocations in their development plans into line with up-to-date population estimates, and the Study will enable them to do this. This is a matter to which the Government attach the greatest importance. Developers—whether meeting private or public needs—must be assured of a long forward supply of land for development.

19. Confidence in the supply of land and the certainty of long term building programmes will contribute towards the development of new building techniques which make better use of skilled labour. This will help towards greater productivity in the construction industry, which the National Building Agency is designed to promote, and which is essential for the new, higher programme of building.
[20. **Machinery for planned expansion.** In the planned expansion schemes it will be necessary to keep a close control over the provision of land for two reasons. The first is to enable the whole programme to be phased correctly. The second is to ensure that land is brought forward when it is required for development, whether by private enterprise or public agencies. Where the development takes the form of new towns, broadly satisfactory machinery already exists. The Government intend to work out fresh arrangements for carrying through major town expansion schemes in partnership with the local authorities, and they envisage that the land needed for these schemes should be acquired well in advance of needs.]

21. **The Green Belt.** The Study draws attention to the heavy pressures on the green belt around London. The Government have already undertaken to maintain the approved metropolitan green belt and to make substantial additions to it, and they have no intention of departing from this policy. They will not permit any general extension of the built-up area of London, and they intend that the approved green belt should be substantially extended and strengthened by the addition of hundreds of square miles of open country. They consider nevertheless that, in their search for more housing land, the local planning authorities should consider the possibilities offered by such land as there is in the green belt which in itself contributes little of value to the purpose of the belt. This could only be very small in relation to the whole but such as there is ought to be considered. The local planning authorities must also have the opportunity to re-examine, in the light of the latest estimates of population growth, the proposals they have made for extending the green belt. The Minister of Housing and Local Government does not therefore propose to approve these in their present form.

22. **Agricultural Land.** The Government endorse the view expressed in the Study that high quality agricultural land should not be taken for urban development wherever there is a practical alternative.

23. **Railways.** There is little likelihood of serious conflict between British Railways' plans and the general pattern of future development outlined in the Study. Where passenger closure proposals are concerned, the Government, before reaching decisions, will in each case take full account of the possible developments put forward in the Study. In particular, they will consider whether the possibilities of future development make it desirable that a line should remain available for future use if required.

24. **The Channel Tunnel.** The Government have recently announced their agreement in principle to the construction of a Channel Tunnel. In reaching this decision they satisfied themselves that the clear national economic advantage which, given certain conditions, is to be expected from the completion of this project would be reinforced by its benefits to other parts of the country than the South-East. The plans for reshaping the railway system to meet future demands will naturally include any proper through links between the tunnel terminal and other parts of the country. In this way the benefits of improved communications with the Continent will be spread far beyond the area of the terminal itself and indeed far beyond the South-East.

25. **Consultation with Local Authorities.** The Study as a whole, and the particular proposals contained in it, raise many important issues in the South-East. The Minister of Housing and Local Government will now consult all
the local planning authorities affected and any other local authorities who may be concerned. They will be invited to give their views as soon as possible, and discussions will be arranged with them.

PROBLEMS OF EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

26. Present position. Employment has been growing faster in the South-East than in any other part of the country. A great part of the employment growth has been in service industries, such as in commerce, building, distribution, transport and other forms of employment closely tied to the populations they serve. There is, however, tight control over expansions of manufacturing industry, particularly in London, and the South-East has been an important source of industry for the development districts.

27. Expansion Schemes. On present indications there will certainly be jobs enough for the increased population of the South-East. The problem is essentially one of distribution. Enough employment will be required in the right places and at the right time for the new expansion schemes which are intended to relieve the pressures on London. This will not be an easy matter. The Study suggests various possible sources of employment. However, the provision of employment for these schemes will not be allowed to detract from the effort to develop other parts of the country. In particular, there will continue to be a rigorous examination of individual firms' proposals for industrial expansion in the South-East.

28. Offices. It will be of particular importance for the implementation of the Government's decisions on the Study to secure much more decentralisation of offices from London and this should be an important source of employment for some of the expansion schemes.

29. Office building in London has been meeting a strong economic demand, and commercial growth, just like industrial growth, contributes to prosperity. Further much of the commercial activity in London is complex and interlinked. The rapid growth of office employment has, however, caused big housing and transport problems over a wide area. The Government have concentrated on improving planning control and providing alternative centres. They have set up the Location of Offices Bureau to encourage and help firms to leave London, and on the basis of the recommendations made by Sir Gilbert Flemming they are pressing ahead with more decentralisation of Government work.

30. Travel to Work in London. The London White Paper* showed that growth in office employment in London was threatening to exhaust the capacity of the suburban railway lines to carry more workers into Central London. British Railways have therefore been making a fresh examination of their services. The preliminary results show that technically their present network could cater for many more commuters, though very considerable changes in the pattern of railway services would be involved. The Victoria Line, which was approved by the Government in 1962 and is now under construction, will be an important supplement to London Transport's services but further additions to their network may be needed. British Railways and London Transport are developing detailed proposals to

increase their capacity. The Government will work with them and with the local authorities concerned to evolve, in the light of the results of the London Traffic Survey, a comprehensive transport plan for London. This must take full account of the plans for new housing and the financial implications.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE

31. As the Study makes plain, population pressures in the South-East are such that planning must begin now even though the greater part of the development in the expansion schemes cannot take place until the 1970's. By determining the extent and location of public investment and industrial building, and by phasing the release of land for development in expansion schemes, the Government will ensure that the proper development of the South-East is carried out without prejudicing growth in other parts of the country. Their machinery which keeps under examination policies which have the most direct bearing on regional development will assist in this. They will modify the existing policies if this should be necessary.

32. The Government believe that the process of regional planning can contribute greatly to the wellbeing and prosperity of the country as a whole. They have already published programmes, which are now being implemented, for Central Scotland and the North-East. Studies of other regions are being prepared. In this way the special needs of individual regions can be identified and a proper national balance achieved and maintained. The problems of the South-East are of a different kind from those of most other regions, but it is clearly in the national interest that they should be dealt with effectively; the Government intend to ensure that this is done.