BUILDING LICENSING LIMITS: REVIEW OF THE CONTROL OF BUILDING OPERATIONS ORDER

Memorandum by the Minister of Works

On instructions from the Prime Minister I draw my colleagues' attention to my memorandum B. (52) 24 recommending changes in the building licensing limits. My proposals were:

1. To change the licensing period to a calendar year.

2. For the eighteen months ending December, 1953, to fix the free limits as follows:
   (a) industrial and agricultural buildings: £1,000, of which not more than £500 to be carried out in July/December, 1952.
   (b) housing and other building work: £500, of which not more than £100 to be carried out in July/December, 1952.

3. To discuss with the Local Authority Associations the question of winding up their agency work other than on new housing.

2. The Building Committee at its meeting on 26th May felt that these proposals might divert labour and materials from new construction and create a bad impression when we are cutting down in other directions. I was invited to reconsider the proposals and to submit them to the Economic Policy Committee.

3. In submitting my proposals to the Economic Policy Committee (E.A. (52) 73), I saw no reason to change my view that the increased freedom which I recommended would give a fillip to the building industry and would not adversely affect the Housing Programme.

4. The Economic Policy Committee felt that it would be wiser to defer for a short time any substantial increase in the licensing limits. I was invited to consider three possible alternatives and submit them to the Building Committee.

5. These alternatives were:
   (a) that the present free limits of £500 for industrial and agricultural (i.e. designated) buildings and £100 for all other work done on private account should be continued for a further twelve months. But when the decision was made public I should state the Government's intention to review the position before the end of the year, and our policy of operating the licensing system in the meantime in accordance with local needs.
(b) same as (a) but with £200 in place of £100 for houses and other non-designated buildings.

(c) that the new Order should operate for six months only and the limits be fixed at £500 for designated building and £100 for non-designated buildings for that period.

6. I strongly recommended proposal (b) and the Committee approved this, and in the light of the arguments used I was satisfied with the decision.

7. The new licensing period begins on 1st July and I must make my Order very soon. I should, therefore, be glad to have Cabinet approval to the course agreed by the Building Committee.

D.E.

Ministry of Works, S.E.1.,

JUNE 17, 1952.