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SECRETC.(57) 156COPY NO. 532nd July, 1957CABINETMANCHESTER'S HOUSING NEEDSMemorandum by the Lord Chancellor

The Minister of Housing is under obligation to reply to the Manchester City Council about the representations made to his predecessor and himself that Manchester cannot solve its housing and slum problem unless it is permitted to develop a large site outside its own boundaries but under its own control. On 24th June the Cabinet agreed in principle to Manchester being told that, if they made a planning application to him for one or more such sites, the Minister would deal with it by arranging an inquiry into Manchester's housing needs, to be conducted by a person independent of his Department (C.C.(57) 47th Conclusions, Minute 2). The Cabinet invited me, in consultation with the Minister of Housing and the Minister of Agriculture, to frame appropriate terms of reference for such an inquiry and to make recommendations regarding its composition and character.

2. The Minister of Housing and Minister of Agriculture concur in the recommendations that follow.
3. The inquiry should be a public local inquiry held under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947. An inquiry under the 1947 Act can take the widest form.
4. It is recommended that the person holding the inquiry should be asked to cover in his report the following subjects:-
  - (a) a realistic assessment of Manchester's likely requirements of housing sites in the years immediately following 1960;
  - (b) the fullest extent to which these requirements can be met within the City boundaries;
  - (c) the degree to which sites outside the City will be needed in those years; and
  - (d) the manner in which the latter need can most reasonably be met, having regard to all relevant factors, including the importance of Manchester being able to maintain a steady and adequate rate of housebuilding, and also of avoiding (or postponing as far as possible) the taking of good agricultural land.

It will be made clear that the inquiry is into the facts; and the person holding it will not be asked to make any recommendation whether,

in the light of the facts, the particular planning application or applications put forward by the City Council should or should not be granted. This will be for the Government to decide, when the report is available.

5. Although reports of Inspectors holding inquiries under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 are not normally published, and the Franks Committee is considering amongst other matters whether publication is desirable, it would seem necessary in the special circumstances of this case, that the factual report should be published; and that this should be made known when the decision to hold an inquiry is announced.

6. In our judgment the type of person who would be best qualified to hold the inquiry and would be likeliest to command the respect of all concerned is an eminent Q.C. with experience of inquiries upon local government matters and also of land use problems in country as well as town. If the Cabinet agree with this view, I shall be happy to assist the Minister of Housing in finding a suitable individual; I understand that the Minister of Housing for his part is anxious that the person chosen shall be acceptable also to the Minister of Agriculture.

K.

Lord Chancellor's Department, S.W.1.

2nd July, 1957.