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MR MILLS
Miss 26/7/93

Start note to Sir Simon

HCS/615/93

FROM: D FELL
16 JULY 1993

cc PS/Mr Atkins (DED, DOE&L)
PS/Sir John Wheeler (DFP, B&L)
PS/Lord Arran (DHSS, DANI&L)
PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
NI Perm Secs —
Mr Ledlie
Mr Thomas
Mr Bell
Mr Holmes
Mr Mackenzie
Mr Steele
Mr Watkins
Mr Williams
Mr Wood (B&L)
Mr McCusker
Mr Morrison (DOE)
Mr Coote (DENI)
Mr Caine

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)

SPRINGVALE: PROPOSED UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

1. Following the Secretary of State's agreement that the Government would make the sort of response outlined in paragraph 5 of your minute of 8 June to a proposal from the University of Ulster to develop a University Campus at Springvale, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Smith, was informally advised.
2. After not a little internal University politicking, the Vice Chancellor reported to me that he had persuaded the Chairman, and several key members of the University Council, to support the proposal, and to aim for an announcement in the first week of August (though prior to formal Council approval). There followed consultation between officials and University representatives on the possible terms of any

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announcement. Last week, however, in a fax sent to me just as he was departing on holidays, the Vice Chancellor indicated that early August might be problematical as some senior academic colleagues (worried inter alia, they said, about the impact of an announcement in the marching season on wider community tensions) may insist on approval by the Council of the University before any announcement.

3. The next meeting of Council is in October and the Vice Chancellor is confident that the proposal will be endorsed then. (It would in principle be possible to call an earlier special meeting of Council but the Vice Chancellor is reluctant to do that as he fears that the meeting could not then avoid debate of another, wholly separate but potentially contentious issue relating to the appointment of a new Chancellor, which he believes might have resolved itself by October.)
4. I have suggested to Prof Smith in an immediate faxed reply to his letter that the University should continue to plan on a contingency basis for an early August announcement but that that plan could be reviewed in the light, especially, of community tensions in early August. In his absence on leave his colleagues dealing with the matter have indicated that nothing would be lost by such an approach. I hope therefore to take stock of the timing arrangements for a Springvale announcement with Prof Smith in early August, and he may still decide on an early announcement, especially as community tensions over the "Twelfth" have been less than feared.
5. In the meantime the Secretary of State will wish to know the terms in which the University would propose to make a planned announcement of a feasibility study on Springvale,

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and he will wish to consider, and approve, the terms of the Government's response.

6. Annex 1 (attached) shows the proposed University press release for a planned announcement. It consists of a short statement followed by detailed notes for editors. These begin by outlining the need for additional higher educational facilities in the Province, and go on to suggest why the facilities should be in Belfast and why at Springvale. Emphasis has been placed on the imaginative linking of community needs and University requirements and also the University's commitment to maintain and enhance the cross-community ethos of Springvale - a vital element of the whole project.
7. Annex 2 is a draft statement which, if the Secretary of State agrees, would be issued in his name in response to the University announcement. There would be no press conference. The draft (which DENI officials have cleared with Michael Ancram) indicates that the Government finds the project attractive but goes on to point out that planning, with an emphasis on community consultation, economic assessment and - fundamentally - resource issues are major considerations which have to be addressed before a definitive response can be made.
8. A leak (which has been our greatest concern in terms of public handling) is always possible before the formal announcement. But we and the University have done some contingency planning against that possibility. If a leak occurs, the University would make a lower key announcement, which would have to be trimmed according to the nature of the leak; while a Government spokesman would respond,



perhaps (though again depending on the nature of the leak) drawing on material such as that in Annex 3.

9. If the Secretary of State is content with these arrangements and the drafts, additional question and answer briefing material will be provided to enable the Secretary of State to respond to doorstep interviews. We will also bring forward plans for early briefing of key individuals at political, church and community level, when we have a definite date for an announcement.
10. The Secretary of State may also care to note that at a recent presentation of the proposal to the RUC, DCC Wallace saw the attractions of it and expressed support in principle provided that it could be presented and implemented as a truly cross-community development. If on the other hand it was perceived as a development to benefit only one side of the community or as resulting in "loss of land to the other side", then policing problems could arise. This underlines the need, as we have always recognised, for carefully balanced presentation and implementation of the project for the benefit of both communities.
11. The Secretary of State is invited to:-
 - note the present position on the University of Ulster announcement of the Springvale feasibility study, with the continuing possibility of a planned announcement in August;
 - note the detail of the proposed announcement by the University of Ulster;



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- note the views expressed by the RUC; and
- agree that the Government's response should be as detailed in Annex 2, in the event of the planned announcement.

12. I shall report back to the Secretary of State on any further developments and on the outcome of my stock-taking with Prof Smith in early August.

DAVID FELL

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UU Announces Plans for Campus in West Belfast

The University of Ulster has this morning announced plans - subject to the approval of the University's Council - for a feasibility study into the establishment of a new campus in West Belfast. If given the go-ahead by Government, the proposed new campus at Springvale, on the Upper Springfield Road, would bring nearly 1000 permanent jobs to the region and also an additional 800 jobs during a five year construction and landscaping programme. It is anticipated that the new campus will eventually have a population of some 4,500 students to help to meet the growing demand for admission to full-time and part-time courses from throughout Northern Ireland.

Professor Smith, Vice-Chancellor of the University, stated that the development had its origins in the University's mission statement which declares that "a major factor in the University's policy will be its commitment to serving the community". "A university campus today has an immense social and economic impact on its local environment", he said. "In addition to teaching and research, job creation initiatives, and cultural and sporting activities, a modern university is a catalyst for investment and for development in the industrial, commercial and recreational facilities of its locality. We have every confidence that a new campus at Springvale would lead to a transformation of what is one of Europe's most depressed regions. In addition to the provision of teaching and research activities, we would be very keen to exploit the training opportunities of working in tandem with local enterprise agencies and other community regeneration organisations."

The Vice-Chancellor stated that the proposed site is ideal for such an exciting development. "Like our other campuses, it will offer programmes of study that are not duplicated elsewhere. This means that it must be accessible to students from all over the province. The University is, therefore, asking Government to look favourably on the idea of providing a direct link from the new campus to the M1. We also feel that the proximity of the Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport would be important in helping us to attract inward investment to the region through technology transfer, job creation initiatives and relevant aspects of our own provision such as management education programmes and applied research projects".

It is envisaged that the course programme of the new campus will reflect both the range and diversity of the University's existing provision, from part-time certificates to doctoral studies. It will take full account of complementarity with Queens University and will provide the University of Ulster with a foothold in the heart of the capital, a significant advantage in promoting outreach and access collaboration with the further education sector in all parts of Northern Ireland.

Professor Smith concluded: "During the feasibility study, there will be the fullest discussion with representatives of all areas of public and professional life in West Belfast. The proposal for the new campus is a natural step in the growth of this University. It reflects our distinctive ethos and our mission to serve all the people of Northern Ireland. If the proposal is feasible, we hope that it will herald a new period of prosperity and community confidence in West Belfast. With our indigent industrial base in this province, the richest - and an infinitely renewable - natural resource in Northern Ireland is its people and I am certain that it is an investment that would be repaid many times over".

Northern Ireland: A Growing Demand for Higher Education

The demand for higher education in Northern Ireland is buoyant and still growing.

Demographic trends of 18 year olds show a growth towards the end of the decade.

The age participation index of school leavers, ie the percentage of the age group entering higher education, has been rising and will continue to rise.

The number of mature and part-time students participating in higher education is also rising.

The University's aims for growth are consistent with those of Government, as stated in expenditure plans and priorities for higher education in Northern Ireland: ¹

"Higher education is a demand-led programme aimed at:

- facilitating participation in higher education by an increasing proportion of the population of Northern Ireland;
- encouraging highly qualified school leavers to remain in Northern Ireland by increasing the availability of higher education places here;
- ensuring a sufficient supply of graduates to meet the needs of employers in Northern Ireland;
- supporting and strengthening Northern Ireland's research base."

Demand for places in Northern Ireland greatly exceeds supply and some 40% of new entrants to higher education leave Northern Ireland, many of them not from choice.

Of those who study in Great Britain, the majority do not return; this is a significant brain drain from Northern Ireland.

The consequence is a loss to Northern Ireland of qualified graduates as well as the loss of the spending power of the student grant package to the local economy.

Meeting the demand

A full-scale university campus would help to meet the demand for increased higher education provision in Northern Ireland and, at the same time, would provide a flagship project for Springvale.

The campus would provide a complete range of university facilities (teaching; research; educational services; social; cultural; recreational; and residential) for some 4,500 students.

¹ Expenditure Plans and Priorities (Northern Ireland), 1993-94 to 1995-96, Cm 2216

It would bring students and staff into the area throughout the year, throughout the week and throughout the day and evening.

It would contribute to the economic life of the area in terms of student, staff and university expenditure.

It would create a climate for the successful development of local enterprise and job creation through technology transfer and business development.

It would contribute to the social, cultural and recreational life of the local community as set out in the Mission Statement of the University of Ulster.

The University of Ulster: Corporate Plan

The University in its Corporate Plan (June 1992) pointed out that to meet these pressures for increased student places, it would need to cater for an increase in its student population from 14,827 students (12,123 fte's) in 1992-93 to some 24,000 students (20,000 fte's) by the year 2000.

The Corporate Plan further notes:

"...substantial additional capital funds will have to be found urgently for capital projects, maintenance and equipment. This position is strongly supported by the Seven Year Review Committee, which has recommended that Government support should be made available to the University....."to enable it to cater for an increasing student population"."

Campus size is governed by three factors: viability, in terms of student numbers to sustain a university ethos; environmental provision such as physical access and car parking; and proximity to centres of population.

The Magee College campus should grow to some 3,500 fte's; the Coleraine campus has limited opportunity for further expansion in terms of mature and part-time students; there are physical constraints on expansion at Jordanstown due to limitations of space, access, car parking etc.

The natural option for significant growth is Belfast.

The University is also mindful of the major economic impact which a campus makes on its local environment; it creates new jobs and fresh economic activity; with the University's strengths in vocational education, applied research and technology transfer it generates and supports industrial development and business growth; and it is an attractive focus for inwards investment.

The academic perspective

It is anticipated that the student population would grow to 4,500 full-time and part-time students on courses at all levels - from post-doctoral research to part-time certificate programmes, and on courses which are both vocationally attractive and intellectually challenging.

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There are two important messages in the title 'University of Ulster at Belfast'. Firstly, 'University of Ulster' emphasises the continuity of the ethos of the University and its province-wide constituency. Secondly, the phrase 'at Belfast' emphasises that it is the campus of the University of Ulster at Belfast, providing for students from throughout the Province and beyond. Its physical location, as with other campuses, does not imply that its students will be drawn solely from its local community.

The growth of the University of Ulster at Coleraine and Magee College has been achieved, in large part, by offering courses which are attractive to both students and employers. It is important, therefore, to have a mix of academic disciplines at Springvale to support courses for which there is student demand.

Springvale: A Unique Opportunity

The Springvale Project is a major commitment by Government to both communities for economic and social regeneration in the area.

The Project promises the early and comprehensive development of over 120 acres of derelict and under-utilised land along the Forth River valley, north and south of the Springfield Road, a little over a mile due west of Belfast city centre.

The central thrust of the Springvale Project is job creation.

Developments in the pipeline include:

- site clearance
- improved physical environment
- new housing
- new training provision
- advance factory

Although these developments will make a significant contribution to physically uplifting the area, there is still considerable scope to improve the prospects for private investment and job creation.

Part of the Springvale complex is still undeveloped and would provide an ideal location for a new campus in Belfast, thus bringing together the need for growth in higher education provision in Northern Ireland and the economic and social regeneration of this area.

An ideal location

The proposed Springvale campus is within student walking distance of the city centre, and spans the Springfield Road.

A commanding location is available for the main university building south of the Springfield Road, beside the lake, looking down over the business and industrial development park towards the city.

On the area north of the Springfield Road a range of academic buildings would be developed

on a landscaped site along the Forth River valley, together with the necessary car parking facilities.

In addition to self-catering student accommodation on campus, there are opportunities for privately rented accommodation in the area.

Paisley Park and the Forth River valley could be developed for recreational use and sporting facilities.

Like other campuses of the University, it will provide degree and other programmes which are not duplicated elsewhere; this means it must be accessible to full-time and part-time students from all parts of Northern Ireland.

In order to provide this physical accessibility, a direct route to the M1 would be required.

A university precinct

A university precinct could link with other higher education provision in St Mary's College and the Royal Victoria Hospital, and promote the development of a 'golden mile' along the lower Springfield Road.

Student and academic participation in the local community has a beneficial impact on the quality of life.

University buildings and grounds will improve the quality of the urban landscape, revitalise an area of disadvantage and dereliction, and through time raise the value of land.

Arts, cultural and recreational programmes are 'open door' activities which encourage the local community to join with students and staff.

Programmes of short courses, conferences and workshops provide opportunities for professional and community groups.

University provision in social science, therapies and nursing, and continuing education makes an important contribution to meeting objectives and priorities in crime reduction, health care and improvements in education.

Funding and Economic Impact

A full economic appraisal has yet to be carried out, but preliminary estimates of the capital costs of the new campus are in the region of £75 million to £100 million.

The University will be seeking a major contribution from Government and will look to other sources, including the private sector at home and abroad, to find the balance.

The economic impact of a university campus on its local environment takes place in a number of ways. There is the direct expenditure of the institution itself on local goods and services and on staff. There is also the related expenditure by students and staff making purchases in the local community.

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In a recent report, University of Northumbria economists found that their

"....institution contributes £83.7 million to the City of Newcastle economy, supporting a total of 3,685 jobs. By the end of the century, this is expected to increase to between £128 million and £140 million, with jobs rising to between 4,869 to 5,085."

Studies by researchers at Durham University have found that the multiplier effect of expenditure associated with their own University was greater than that relating to industry or other commercial activity.

The proposed Springvale campus could provide **job creation opportunities** for some 1,700 additional jobs:

- 800 jobs per year for each of 5 years directly through construction work;
- 600 permanent jobs from university employment, both academic and ancillary;
- 300 jobs in the local area arising from staff, student and university expenditure.

The campus would provide **business development opportunities** through:

- support and collaboration in business development and growth;
- new business formation which is a key objective of management education;
- technology transfer leading to the establishment of sound business ventures;
- continued development of the University's research base with particular emphasis on the needs of industry, commerce, and the wider community.

The campus would provide **wider educational and training opportunities** through access by the local community, BIFHE (Whiterock Centre, etc) T&EA and local schools.

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

SPRINGVALE: PROPOSAL FOR NEW UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Commenting today on the proposal by the University of Ulster to develop a new campus on the Springvale site in West Belfast, the Secretary of State said -

"This is a very imaginative proposal which marries the need to meet the growing demand for university places from young people and mature students throughout Northern Ireland with the need for economic regeneration in an area of multiple deprivation in Belfast - an area which straddles the physical boundary between the two communities.

At this stage the proposal is only in outline form and will require a full economic appraisal to determine whether it would be feasible and if it would represent value for money. In addition, it must satisfy planning requirements and will require an amendment to the already published Comprehensive Development Scheme for Springvale. In examining the proposal the Planning Service would want to take full account of the views of local people before making any recommendations.

Finally, there is the question of resources. This is a new, and large scale development, and obviously does not feature in forward public expenditure plans. Public expenditure in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the country, is likely to be subject to *him* (some) constraint over the next number of years. Therefore resource decisions would hinge on whether it could be afforded within the constraints of the public expenditure block and

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whether, in particular, other sources of finance in addition to the public sector could be established.

But I come back to my first point: this is an imaginative and positive contribution to restore depressed areas of Belfast. It is a visionary initiative and as such it deserves, and will receive, close attention."

The Secretary of State indicated that the proposal would be given very careful consideration over the next number of months and that a decision based on the outcome of the economic appraisal, planning review and assessment of public expenditure implications, would be made in due course.

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DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

DEVELOPMENTS IN SPRINGVALE

Replying to suggestions today that the University of Ulster was considering developing a new University Campus in Belfast, a Government spokesman said -

"The Government has not yet received a formal approach to support a development. A proposal of this nature would require planning approval with full public consultation and economic appraisal, and would be subject to the availability of resources. It would be expensive and could be supported only by adjustments elsewhere in the Northern Ireland public expenditure block. Nevertheless, the idea is imaginative and constructive, not least in the contribution it could make to disadvantaged areas. As such it will be given full consideration by the Government."