

From: PS/Secretary of State
4 August 1993

1691 DB

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

*cc Mr Atkins
Mr Bell
Mr Holmes
Mr Mackenzie
Mr Steele
Mr Watkins
Mr Williams
Mr Wood
Mr McCusker
Mr Morrison
Mr Coote
Mr Caine*
9/8

PS/Mr Fell - B

SPRINGVALE

The Secretary of State was grateful for Mr Fell's note of 30 July, reporting his latest contacts with the Vice-Chancellor. He has noted that an announcement is now likely to be delayed until the second half of September.

(Signed)

JONATHAN STEPHENS
PS/Secretary of State

Mr Reynolds
This is highly confidential at this stage. I am passing it to you because, if the scheme ever goes ahead, I understand it would be helpful to have for some time.

*JS
9/8*

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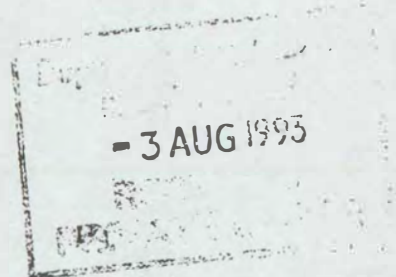
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Mr Smith
DB 1482

HCS/682/93



FROM: D FELL
30 JULY 1993

cc PS/Mr Atkins (DED, DOE&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (DFP, L&B) - B
PS/Lord Arran (DHSS, DANI&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, L&B) - B
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Mr Mackenzie
Mr Steele - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Williams - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr McCusker - B
Mr Morrison, DOE
Mr Coote, DENI
Mr Caine - B

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE - (L&B) - B

SPRINGVALE

1. Thank you for your minute to me of 29 July reporting on that morning's Ministerial discussion of the proposed University of Ulster development at Springvale, to which you attached the revised and approved press release, representing the Government response to any announcement by the University.
2. When the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Trevor Smith, came to see me later that day, I took him through our proposed press release, and drew his attention in particular to the fact that it did not, and could not, represent a commitment by Government at this

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stage. He fully understood the rationale for this, accepted that Government could not go further, and was content to proceed to an announcement by the University in the expectation of the sort of response by Government which I had outlined.

3. Timing still represents a problem for him: while at the beginning of July he had intended, having consulted the Chairman and key lay members of the University Council, to proceed to an announcement of a feasibility study of the Springvale project, in early August, without reference to the full Council, other sensitive issues on which there are divided views on the Council (including the selection of a new Chancellor - apparently a choice between the poet Seamus Heaney, and Rabbi Julia Neuberger - and the selection of a new Chairman of the Council - to succeed Sir Robert Carsewell) have led the Vice-Chancellor to conclude that it would be impolitic to make the announcement before at least informing the members of the Council. While he understands the continuing risk of a leak, he feels that it would not be sensible to call a special meeting of the Council before its next scheduled meeting on 8 October. The papers for this meeting will issue in mid-September, and since the papers go to 45 members, the Vice-Chancellor considers (I am sure correctly) that the news is bound to leak at that stage, and that he should make the Springvale announcement on the day after the papers issue. He wishes to confirm that timing with Sir Robert Carsewell next week, and will let me know their conclusion. On the assumption that Sir Robert agrees, we can therefore proceed to plan for an announcement probably around the third week of

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September. If there are changes to the plan, I will report further.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Fell".

DAVID FELL

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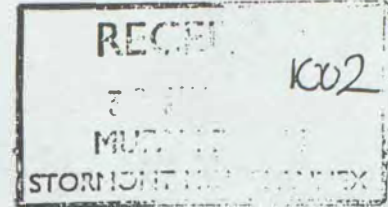
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FROM: JONATHAN STEPHENS
PS/SECRETARY OF STATE
29 JULY 1993



Mr. M. H. 2/8. cc: Mr. B. 2/8. Mr. C. 2/8. Mr. R. 2/8. Mr. S. 2/8. Mr. T. 2/8. Mr. U. 2/8. Mr. V. 2/8. Mr. W. 2/8. Mr. X. 2/8. Mr. Y. 2/8. Mr. Z. 2/8.

To see

Jim M. Cantey
Ps/Secretary (Acting)
2/8

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Atkins (DED, DOE&L) - B/M
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L, B&DFP) - B/M
PS/Lord Arran (DHSS, DANI&L) - B/M
PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, L&B) - B/M
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
NI Perm Secs - M
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Holmes (DENI) - M
Mr Mackenzie OOE - M
Mr Steele STORMONT HOUSE ANNEX - M
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Williams - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr McCusker CENT SEC - M
Mr Morrison (DOE) - M
Mr Coote (DENI) - M
Mr Caine - B

MR FELL

MINISTERIAL MEETING: SPRINGVALE

At this morning's ministerial meeting, there was a discussion on the proposed University of Ulster development at Springvale, and the response the Government should give to it. Mr Atkins, Sir John Wheeler, Michael Ancram, PUS, Mr Fell, Mr Ledlie, Mr Bell and Mr Caine were present.

2. The Secretary of State noted the views expressed in Michael Ancram's minute of 20 July, Sir John Wheeler's of 21 July and Mr Atkins's of 23 July. This was a dramatic and imaginative proposal which could be of advantage to both sides of the community in West Belfast. It would be unreasonable to turn it down at this stage, but no legitimate expectation of financial support should be created.

3. In discussion, the following points were made:

- there was a risk that any signal of support might be interpreted, however misguidedly, as a commitment to provide public funds. It was clear that the public expenditure position was, and would remain, very tight. Public support for the proposal could only come at the expense of other deserving programmes;
- on the other hand, the project offered a significant opportunity to place an imaginative development in an area of high deprivation. It should go ahead if at all possible, albeit with the maximum private sector funding;
- it would be important to give the maximum encouragement to private sector funding as an alternative to public expenditure. But to stand the best chance of securing private sector finance, some sign of Government support would be needed;
- on present plans, it was unlikely that decisions on any public expenditure support for the project would be required in the current PES round.

4. The Secretary of State concluded that the Government should continue to express interest in what was a very imaginative proposal. However, the press release prepared in anticipation of any announcement of the proposal, should be amended to reflect the very tight expenditure constraints, the importance of private sector finance and the impossibility of giving any commitment at this stage.

5. I attach the revised press release, as approved by the Secretary of State.

SIGNED

JONATHAN STEPHENS
PS/Secretary of State
29 July 1993

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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. It 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. This area straddles the physical boundary between the two communities.

At this stage the proposal is only in outline form. It will require a full economic appraisal to determine whether it would be feasible, and represent good value for money. In addition, it must satisfy planning requirements. It would 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 new and large scale development obviously does not feature in present forward public expenditure plans. Public expenditure in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the country, will be subject to very tight constraint over the next few years. Therefore resource decisions would hinge on whether it could be afforded within the constraints of the public expenditure block, and whether, in particular, private sources of finance in addition to public funds could be established.

This visionary initiative, however, with its particular significance for deprived areas of Belfast, deserves and will receive the most careful examination.

The Secretary of State indicated that the proposal would be given very careful consideration over coming months. No commitment could be made at this stage, but 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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