

The Rt. Hon. John Major, PC, MP,  
10 Downing Street,  
LONDON  
SW1A 2AA

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22 June 1995

Dear Prime Minister,

**University of Ulster's Proposed Peaceline Campus  
at Springvale in North and West Belfast**

As you will know, Mr. Richard Needham announced the creation of the Springvale development scheme in October 1992. Despite considerable environmental and housing improvements it proved difficult to attract commercial or industrial companies to play the vital role of anchor tenant. In March 1993 I approached government with the idea of developing an inner city campus of the University at Springvale to act as the anchor tenant. Since then the proposal has been demonstrated to be viable, educationally and economically, following a major appraisal by Touche Ross and is subsequently being evaluated by Pieda, a Scottish firm of consultants, on behalf of the Northern Ireland government. Their draft conclusions, I understand, are currently being considered within government and an announcement is expected soon as to whether it will receive approval.

As I remarked to you when we met at Hillsborough Castle, your government has achieved, with the cessation of violence, the possibility of achieving a lasting and viable settlement in Ireland which has been the ambition of every administration since Gladstone. While awaiting governmental approval, the proposed peaceline campus has already aroused very substantial practical interest and support. Fujitsu, on the prospect of the campus, has moved into the advanced factory facility which had lain empty since it had been built, while Wellworths, the extensive retail chain belonging to Dr. Tony O'Reilly's Fitzwilton group, announced at President Clinton's conference in May that it would be building a major retail development at Springvale if the campus

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goes ahead. The International Fund for Ireland has already granted £5m towards the project and the European Commission has had a series of discussions with us regarding funding assistance, not least for our proposed community and schools outreach programmes. It has attracted a good deal of interest in the United States and at the Washington Conference Vice-President Gore in his welcoming address commented that "... the University of Ulster's Peaceline Campus at Springvale [is] an exciting project which will pioneer innovative approaches to economic and social development for all the peoples of Northern Ireland." I cite all of these to indicate the extensive international backing and goodwill the proposed campus has received.

Within the next two months everybody is looking forward to the first anniversary of the cessation of violence. This would afford an excellent opportunity to announce government approval for the campus. North and West Belfast constitutes the area of greatest economic deprivation in the European Union and until last year had for twenty-five years been the epicentre of the greatest civil disturbance and violence within the EU. We have already demonstrated that we can attract inward investment and we are developing programmes which follow the successful policies adopted by the City University of New York and Boston University in providing not simply higher education places but assisting with educational improvement in primary and secondary schools, economic regeneration and social enhancement. The courses we provide include access courses for mature students, a variety of certificates and diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. We are not an ivory tower university but one which undertakes extensive part-time provision, whose teaching is highly practical, and whose research is recognised for its practical nature. There has been no alternative project presented by others for Springvale and, even if one were to be forthcoming now, it would have to go through the same appraisal and review procedures as we have undergone which have taken more than two years.

You have demonstrated an unparalleled personal commitment to Northern Ireland and I hope this suggestion for an anniversary announcement commends itself to you.

Yours sincerely,

TREVOR SMITH

c.c. The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, PC, MP,  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland