

REPEAL THIS MALIGNANT PLANNING ACT

*Land Agents Proclaim its Disastrous Effects—Extracts from their Annual Reports**

HAMPSHIRE

The compensation and development charge provisions of this Act should be repealed immediately. Unless they are repealed the Government will not achieve its target of building 300,000 permanent houses per annum, due to the fact that suitable land in many towns is not available. There is a natural reluctance on the part of owners to sell their land for a nominal sum (the "existing use" value provided under the terms of the Act) when they have paid the full market value and have no assurance that they will be paid more than a nominal amount of compensation to reimburse them for the loss they sustain. Furthermore, the liability for the payment of 100 per cent. development charge, and the slow and involved procedure necessary under the Act before any development can take place, act as a considerable deterrent.

One of the objects envisaged by the Act was to reduce the cost of acquisition of land by local authorities, but they are now learning from experience that under the provisions of the Act the land is, in effect, costing them more. Admittedly, the acquiring authority only pays the owners the "existing use" value, but, in addition to this, they also have to pay to the Central Land Board a development charge, so that the total cost invariably exceeds the figure at which the land could have been bought on a pre-Act basis. The Act, therefore, is not only preventing land from changing hands in the open market, but it is also increasing the cost of providing houses, in addition to the colossal expense which the country is incurring in maintaining the Central Land Board, and forcing private enterprise to waste an enormous amount of manpower in following the procedure laid down.—*Fox & Sons (Bournemouth, Southampton, Brighton and Worthing)*.

HAMPSHIRE (PORTSMOUTH)

Industrial land, which at one time since the war was readily saleable at about £3,000 per acre on the outskirts of the city, is now virtually unsaleable, even with the benefit of a Section 80 certificate or a clearance under Section 78. Owners of such land are, however, in no hurry to sell, as with the excellent labour position in Portsmouth it is a certainty that directly building licences are obtainable the big prices will again be realised.

There has, in our experience, been little improvement in the long delays in obtaining planning permissions where County Councils are the planning authorities, and it is obvious that the delegation of powers to area and district council committees has not led to the harmony within the "planning machine" which it should.

As to the financial provisions of the Act, we are still convinced that development charges as now assessed will retard development when once building operations can be carried out more freely.—*Hall, Pain & Foster (Portsmouth)*.

KENT

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, has not, in our opinion, brought about the intended effect. Very few owners are prepared to sell at existing use value, and those purchasing land or property for any form of development, seem to regard development charge as a form of purchase tax. The few transactions in land for development which have been completed during the year indicate that the development charge will eventually be borne by the consumer. This would also seem to apply to mineral-bearing land, where land-owners are not prepared voluntarily to allow their land to be excavated unless they receive considerably more than existing use value for their land.—*Prall & Prall (Dartford)*.

BEDFORDSHIRE

Very few plots of building land change hands at "existing use value" and purchasers are prepared to pay nearly "pre-Act" prices.—*Stafford, Roger & Merry (Bedford)*.

* Published in the January issue of the "Estates Gazette."

BERKSHIRE

Building sites are not easily found owing to the operation of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, which provides no incentive for owners to sell. The principal effect of the Act as it affects us is the removal of practically all building land from the market owing to the lack of incentive to sell. The result is that buyers in the end are probably paying twice the value of the land by the time the development charge is paid.—*Dreweatt, Watson & Barton (Newbury)*.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Very little building land is changing hands, owners being unwilling to sell until they have some of the yield of the £300 million fund.—*Pretty & Ellis (Great Missenden)*.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Parts VI and VII of the Town and Country Planning Act continue to damp down enterprise, and bring about stagnation of development. No doubt, in the past, we experienced too much development with too little planning, but to-day we have too much planning and too little development.—*Bidwell & Son (Cambridge and London)*.

DEVONSHIRE

The Town and Country Planning Act is already not workable in its present form, and as our economy is "loosened" its constrictive effect will become more apparent.—*Rippon, Boswell & Co. (Exeter)*.

Development Charge negotiations remain with us. We do not think the change of Government is likely to bring amendments to the Act, although we had hoped for an abatement of a percentage of Development Charges. It is obvious that in South Devon very few properties have sold at existing use values, though the intention of the Act is that they should be. We are awaiting with great interest the practical application, in 1952, of the planning provisions.—*Waycotts (Torquay and Paignton)*.

DORSET

The demand has been mainly for single plots and in spasms coinciding with the issue of building licences by local authorities. To the purchaser who has been granted a building licence, the price of the plot has been of minor consideration and he has been willing to pay, regardless of development charge, a price at or near pre-Act value.—*Adams, Rench & Wright (Poole, Bournemouth, Weymouth)*.

ESSEX

The return of the Conservative Government has brought a flicker of interest in the land market, which hitherto has been moribund, and if and when the promise to overhaul the Town and Country Planning Act is implemented, free dealing in this commodity may well be a highlight of 1952.—*Talbot & White (Southend)*.

LEICESTERSHIRE

Many building extensions to factory premises were carried out in spite of development charges, and in the case of very large concerns these have been quite heavy, as they have now used up their ten per cent. tolerance.

Few land sales took place, primarily due to the lack of building licences. The assessment of development charges also prevented development being undertaken, as there was no inducement to an owner to sell the land at its existing use value in accordance with the terms of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947. Most land has been withdrawn from the market.

We recently had a Compulsory Purchase Order from the Ministry of Supply on a freehold factory site of 4½ acres and the District Valuer's offer was £150; in the same road another owner paid £10,000 cash development charge for building on one and a half acres of his own land at his own

Disastrous Effects of the Town and Country Planning Act (Contd.)

expense. We hope that Part VI of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, will soon be amended to avoid such gross unfairness.—*Andrew & Ashwell (Leicester)*.

LINCOLNSHIRE

Owners are at a loss to know what compensation they will actually receive under Part VI of the Town and Country Planning Act and are therefore disinclined to sell their land for development until the position is clarified.—*Escritt & Barrell (Grantham)*.

LONDON'S WESTERN SUBURBS

During the year a large number of persons who have reason to believe that they can obtain a licence have been seeking plots on which to build a single house, but as a result of the Town and Country Planning Act there is little land in the market, owners not being prepared to sell at the restricted value. Where sales have taken place, prices paid are very greatly in excess of the restricted value figure and, in almost all cases, without the benefit of the Section 58 claim. We hold the view that amending legislation is very desirable to create a free market in building land.—*Tyser, Greenwood & Co. (Chiswick)*.

MIDDLESEX

Despite the difficulty of obtaining building licences, we find the demand for single building plots has increased, particularly since the change of Government, but we feel that this may be due to the fact that there are very few good building plots in this district, and that our experience may not be general. There have been many enquiries for industrial land, but none is available in this area.

Any amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act which will counteract its present tendency to sterilise the development of land would be an improvement.—*Gale & Power (Staines)*.

NORFOLK

The majority of building plots have been sold by private treaty and prices have been in excess of those paid before the passing of the Town and Country Planning Act. Development charges continue to have an adverse effect on redevelopment.—*Cruso & Wilkin (King's Lynn)*.

NORTHAMPTON

A general review of the whole of Parts VI and VII (of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947) is essential if private building is to be begun again on a large scale. The initiative which would have started many enterprises has been sapped by the restrictions and uncertainties of this Act.—*Jackson-Strops & Staffs (Northampton, London and Branches)*.

NORTHUMBERLAND

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, has caused great hardship in cases where property has been acquired by local authorities at existing use value. In some cases vendors are entitled to compensation for loss of development value, but, even taking the most optimistic view as to the dividend which will be paid out of the global sum, the final result will be a severe financial loss.

Land is still being sold at prices in excess of existing use value.—*Sanderson, Townend & Gilbert (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)*.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Within the city boundary there has been throughout the year a very good demand for building land zoned for residential user, and despite the development charge provisions of Part VII of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, the prices realised have increased even further from the existing use value than in 1950. Our experience is that it is the exception rather than the rule that land is changing hands at or about its restricted value. This, in our opinion, is an unfortunate state of affairs, as this high price, plus the development charge, has to be passed on to the consumer.—*Walker, Walton & Hanson (Nottingham)*.

OXFORDSHIRE

The involved procedure required under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, for permission to develop or to obtain change of use has in a number of cases delayed negotiations to such an extent that intending purchasers have become despondent and withdrawn from the project, and it is hoped that a more expedient method of handling applications of this kind may be instituted to the benefit of all concerned.

Apart from this, the Act is still paralysing to some extent sales of land suitable for building purposes, since owners are reluctant to sell at existing use value until they know for certain what compensation they will receive under this S.1 claim.—*Buckell & Ballard (Oxford)*.

SHROPSHIRE

Building land sales are insignificant. The incidence of development charge has had its effect on values in many cases and we have been amazed at the number of owners who neglected to make a claim under Part VI.—*Henry Manley & Sons, Ltd. (Whitchurch, Crewe, Market Drayton, Nantwich)*.

SUSSEX

Building land is not being offered, as owners are not prepared to sell at present use value.

Delay in obtaining planning permission for change of user is detrimental to the realisation of the larger properties.

Development of building estates by private enterprise in this district is no longer an economic proposition, owing to development charges, licence restrictions, and high cost of constructing roads and sewers.—*Turner, Rudge & Turner (East Grinstead)*.

SUSSEX (BRIGHTON AND HOVE)

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, has created an artificial market in building land. The result in Brighton and Hove is that anyone wishing to purchase land upon which to erect a house under licence has a very limited choice. Without radical amendment of the Act, it is difficult to see how the position is going to be eased.

It is confidently anticipated that amended legislation will make substantial alterations to the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947. It is at least hoped that there will be still freer change of use permitted without the payment of development charges and particularly that any conversion of premises into living accommodation will be entirely freed of this charge.—*Brighton and Hove Auctioneers' Association*.

NORTH WALES

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, has had a most noticeable "braking" effect on transactions of building land of all types. The uncertainty as to the amount of compensation which an owner may receive, even when he has been fortunate enough to obtain a satisfactory settlement of a Part VI claim, has made him reluctant to dispose of his land unless a figure near to the unrestricted value is offered.—*A. Kent Jones & Co. (Wrexham)*.

SOUTH WALES

Rebuilding is now taking place in the centre of Swansea, and the larger multiple firms which have taken up prominent sites are sub-letting accommodation which is surplus to their requirements. The rents being quoted are in excess of the local small traders' idea of fair value. There is a danger that some of the accommodation being provided in the central area will meet little demand.—*Ino. Olwen Watkins (Swansea and Cardiff)*.

YORKSHIRE

In building land there has been very little movement, due to the effects of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947. The demand is considerable and it is becoming extremely difficult for a licence holder to discover a plot.—*B. L. Wells & Son (Hull)*.

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