

NOTES ON CURRENT TOWN PLANNING SCHEMES

A Northern Group

Southport—Middleton—Ellesmere Port—Newcastle-on-Tyne

It is the intention of the *Town Planning Review* to publish from time to time notes on current schemes under the Act which contain points of special interest. In our last issue the group within the London Metropolitan police area was dealt with, also the small Liverpool Oak-Hill Park scheme, the particular interest of which consisted in the large proportion of the land which is already developed.

In the present issue four northern schemes are dealt with, each of which presents some features which may prove of value and interest to other local authorities.

Southport

On plate 29 we reproduce a plan of Southport showing the area of the borough since the recent incorporation of Birkdale and Ainsdale (the portion south of the line A—B), and the area included in the Town Planning scheme for permission to prepare which application has been made to the Local Government Board. The area of the land is about 2,800 acres, and it consists largely of sand dunes and agricultural land adjoining the sea coast, but it includes a small area of land in Ainsdale on which buildings have been directed. A reference to the article on the proposals for Southport by Mr. Jarratt, the Town Clerk, in the first number of our second volume, will show that many of the improvements which he suggested were designed for this area: the Outer Circle Boulevard is actually outside the borough boundary, but the important double boulevard on either side of the Cheshire Lines Railway falls within the scheme; and the extensive planting of pine trees advocated, and, in fact, the determination of the general character of the whole of this sandhill area, will be possible with the help of the Act. This is of first importance; it is anticipated that the growth of the borough will be largely in this direction, and some such contrast (pine woods) to the general monotony of Southport surroundings will probably materially hasten its growth, as has happened at Bournemouth. The sandhills may well be considered to come within the scope of the provision for the

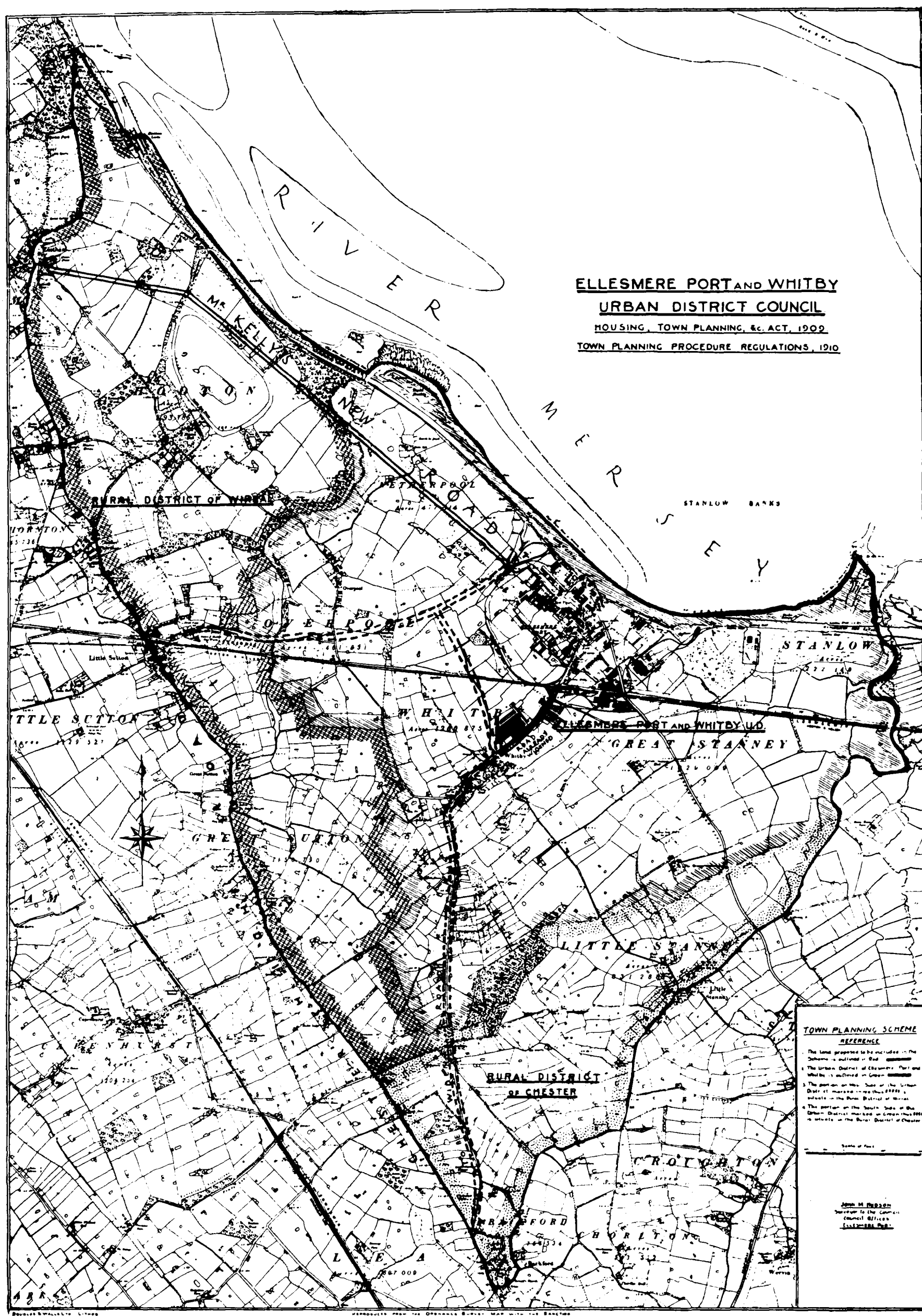
preservation of objects of beauty or local interest: the existing Birkdale Golf Links keeps at present a large part unobstructed, but their permanence is not guaranteed, and it is intended in the scheme to preserve certain parts of them as permanent open spaces. Without a Town Planning scheme what would happen would probably be the total disappearance of the sandhills as the town gradually spread over them—not, indeed, with undesirable developments of rows of cottages, this part of Southport being naturally a high-class residential district—but the mildly wild character imparted by the sandhills would be lost and a monotonously respectable suburb take their place. It is hoped to be able to preserve the characteristic quality of the site and even add the new interest of pine woods, while at the same time development is not checked.

Middleton: An Owners' Scheme

The Alkrington Estate, for which a Town Planning scheme has been undertaken, has an area of about 300 acres, of which all except 21 acres immediately surrounding Alkrington Hall are in the hands of one owner. The land lies high and is situated within the Middleton boundary, to the south of the town, and between it and Manchester; it is traversed by the main road from Manchester to Rochdale, along which the Manchester City Council electric trams run.

Building is already in progress, and a plan was prepared two or three years ago by Mr. Thomas Adams in order to develop the estate on garden suburb lines. It was found, however, impossible to do this without contravening the Middleton By-laws and the Middleton Corporation Act, 1910; in fact, all the roads as planned contravened one or other of the regulations. Section 48 of the Middleton Corporation, 1910, insists that "no street shall be laid out within the borough exceeding 300 feet in length without having a street at each end thereof, and an intersecting street at intervals of not more than 300 feet in any such street." Garden suburb planning is needlessly hampered by this restriction. Accordingly it was decided to prepare a Town Planning Scheme, which has been done by Messrs. Pepler and Allen, of London, who represented the owners at the L.G.B. enquiry, on April 30th.

With regard to the width of streets and paving there are many points at variance with the by-laws, though the owners are not on the whole asking for a diminution of requirements, as they are voluntarily giving greater widths than demanded where the exigen-



Plan showing three sections of the area proposed to be included in the scheme, the North in the R.D. of Wirral, the centre the U.D. of Ellesmere Port, and the South in the R.D. of Chester. The Naylor Estate new road is shown solid in the northern section, and other needed road connections are dotted.

ELLESMERE PORT

cies of traffic are likely to make it desirable. Thus one road to connect up Manchester New Road and Middleton Junction Railway Station they propose to make 65 feet wide, and they agree to give up free of cost a strip of land averaging about 10 feet wide on the west side of Manchester Road, which it is necessary to add to that road in order to make it 60 feet wide, the Middleton Corporation paying the cost of road widening. Again, any roads which will be likely to bear more than purely residential traffic are to be 42 feet wide, but with carriageways only 24 feet wide, paths 6 feet wide, and two grass margins 3 feet wide. It is when we come to the 36 feet road that the proposals are lower than the by-laws demand, the carriageway being 18 feet instead of 24 feet; and nearly one-third of all the roads it is proposed to make 25 feet wide, whereas the minimum street intended for use as a carriage road allowed by the by-laws is 36 feet. With regard to these 25 feet roads it must be borne in mind that they are intended to bear no through traffic, as it is the intention to keep them private and retired in character for the better enjoyment of the residents. The owners will, however, if thought desirable, fix at least 20 feet building lines to these roads and arrange that they and their lessees will give up a further 5 feet on either side for addition to the width of road at any time if unforeseen traffic requirements make it necessary, and the Middleton Corporation wish to make a wider road.

With this precaution there can be no objection to these narrow roads, and it is satisfactory to be able to state that the Corporation is supporting the owners in this scheme, which infringes their own by-laws. One point only the Corporation are not supporting—the amendment of By-law 4 (1895) by the substitution of 8 feet 6 inches instead of 9 feet for the minimum height of living rooms of all floors. The reason for suggesting this amendment is that in the case of an estate spaciouly planned as this one, there is no need for such lofty rooms, and that the community would greatly benefit by the cheapening in cost of the houses by the saving of the unnecessary height.

Ellesmere Port and Whitby U.D.C., Cheshire

The area which it is proposed to embrace in the Town Planning scheme of Ellesmere Port includes a considerable tract in the rural districts of Chester and Wirral: the total area thus enclosed is close upon 11 square miles, of which about five are within the Urban District boundary. This may seem a large area to include as land likely to be used for building purposes by a community of 10,000 or

11,000 inhabitants, but there are certain special features connected with this scheme which are claimed to justify this and which call for some comment.

It must be remembered that Ellesmere Port is a new place, and one whose growth from 4,000 in 1901 to 10,000 in 1911 may be immensely accelerated during the next 10 years. Situated originally at the point where the Shropshire Union Canal entered the Mersey, it suddenly acquired greatly increased importance by the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. The Shropshire Union Railway and Canal formed extensive basins and built large grain silos, and these were followed by flour mills and corrugated iron works: in a few years an industrial town sprang up which bids fair to spread along the Mersey until it reaches Port Sunlight. Being thus a new creation it is disconnected from any main roads in the vicinity—the Chester High Road passing some two miles to the west. The most urgent necessity, therefore, which it is hoped to accomplish by means of a scheme under the Act, was the adequate provision of main approach roads. The dotted lines on plan show the direction of two connections which it is proposed to make, the southern, the widening of an existing road with the Chester Road. In both cases it is necessary to go outside the boundary to effect this.

Another important connection is necessary with the Chester Road to the north near the village of Eastham. Nearly the whole of this property is in the hands of one owner, the Trustees of the Naylor Estates, and their surveyor, Mr. Sydney Kelly, F.S.I., has prepared a scheme for a 72-foot road on the lines shown on our plan. This road has been made the subject of an agreement with the Ellesmere Council and the Estate, and it is estimated that it will cost £30,000. This road, which will shorten the distance to Birkenhead and Ellesmere Port by two miles, and do away with several steep gradients, is already in hand, and of itself will bring a large area of land on either side into immediate building prospect. On the one side of the 72ft. track, 100ft. is being reserved for a railway, and on the other side 36ft. for a tramway. This triple road commences at Eastham village, where it leaves the county highway about six miles from Birkenhead. It proceeds through fields and woods in a south-easterly direction until it reaches a point about 200 yards from the Manchester Ship Canal on the lower side of the Hooton Park Racecourse. Thence it runs parallel with the Canal to Ellesmere Port, and finally passes over the railway bridge at Merseytown Road, thus affording direct access to the eastern or dock side of the port. In order to cross the Poole Hall Brook and to maintain the level an

embankment 30ft. high will span the valley between Booston Wood and the Canal.

It may be gathered from the foregoing remarks that these new roads are not merely lines to be laid down to follow future development, but urgently-needed connections, without which much of the local trade must suffer. The cost of the north connection will be largely borne by the Naylor Estate. The south road, which has already been widened as far as the village of Whitby, is estimated to cost about £6,000 for that portion which is within the Ellesmere Port U.D. boundary. Application has been made for this and the Little Sutton connection to the Road Board for financial assistance, and it is intended that they shall then be taken over by the County Council.

Besides these main road requirements there is plenty of improvement possible in the little town itself. If the Act had come into force earlier a model industrial town might have resulted. As it is, it is planned on the haphazard system and the usual cramping of houses as to ground area. It is sad to walk along one of the principal residence roads, Stanley Road, and glance up the side-entering streets, each of which is lined with houses squashed on to the minimum plot, as it were in the heart of a town, though each street ends up in open fields and woods. And this introduces another interesting feature of the scheme, that all the built-up property has been *included* and not excluded. It is understood that the reason for this is that there are so many vacant plots, and that it may be necessary to cut through some new connecting streets, and in general deal with the centre before it becomes too late.

The Local Government Board Enquiry takes place on May 2nd, and it is interesting to note that the two Rural Districts intend to oppose the scheme, though many of the owners concerned are favourable to it. We also hear that one of these Rural Districts intends to embark on a scheme itself, and under these conditions we imagine Ellesmere Port would be quite willing to drop their section—the only object of including it is to ensure that something will be done, and it seems probable that this may have acted as a spur.

It is always valuable to be able to give some idea of the cost of the preparation of Town Planning schemes, and it is stated that up to the time of the Local Government Board Enquiry the cost of the present scheme has not exceeded £50. This includes the service of all notices, the preparation of Maps 1, 2, and 3 for the Local Government Board, the lithographing of Map No. 1, a copy of which was

sent round to every owner or occupier, the preparation of a large scale map in the Council Offices, and a deputation to London and the Liverpool Conference.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Local Government Board's Authority Obtained

By Order dated the 30th March, 1912, the Local Government Board have authorised the Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council to proceed with the preparation of a scheme in respect of the Craghall Dene area of about 54 acres. As this is, it is believed, the first case in which authority has been given in respect of an area which contains as much land outside the applicant Council's area as there is inside, a reference to various *dicta* of the Inspector at the Local Enquiry will be of interest, and will be useful as a guide to those Councils which are now considering Town Planning schemes, especially those comprising lands outside the borough boundaries.

At the Enquiry (which was held on the 15th February, 1912, by Thomas Adams, Esq.) the case for the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Corporation was conducted by the Deputy Town Clerk (Mr. H. Lee), and the Gosforth Urban District Council (in whose district half of the proposed area is situate), the North-eastern Railway Company, and several property owners were represented in opposition.

After the usual preliminary description by the Deputy Town Clerk and the opening speech of the Inspector, in which it was clearly stated that the scope of the Enquiry was limited to such details as were necessary to make out a *prima facie* case for including the area in a Town Planning scheme, on the Representative of the North-eastern Railway Company, whose line cuts the area into two halves, contending that there was no *prima facie* case for the scheme, the Inspector said :

The *prima facie* case is established in part and on general grounds when you admit that your land is likely to be used for building purposes, but in this instance, as the area is outside the Corporation's own area, the case has to be made somewhat stronger.

After explaining to an objector who had seen a plan with new roads marked on that such proposals were purely tentative, and that there was no scheme before them to-day, the Inspector remarked that he will have full opportunity for discussing the details and objecting at the next stage.

Mr. Holmes (Clerk to the Gosforth U.D. Council): I am afraid we none of us know very much about it here. At the next stage shall we then be told that the principle has been agreed to and it is simply detail?

The Inspector : The application at the moment is whether the Corporation of Newcastle shall have permission to prepare a Town Planning scheme. It neither binds the Corporation, nor the owners, nor Gosforth to any of the details in the proposed scheme, they are only tentatively submitted by the Corporation. The whole question of the details will have to be subject to a further map, and a further Enquiry, at which you will have full opportunity of being represented.

Mr. Holmes : That will be simply limited to these details ?

The Inspector : It will then, probably, have been established that the area has been suitable for Town Planning, and that question, of course, will cease.

Mr. Holmes : This is like the preamble, and the next stage will be the clauses ?

The Inspector : The question of any details to be included in that scheme.

Mr. Holmes : Then do I understand from what fell from you that in your opinion because it is building land it is therefore *prima facie* the subject for a scheme.

The Inspector : No, that brings it within the object of the Act, which says any land which is likely to be used for building purposes.

Mr. Holmes : I follow, but we do not quite understand, from what fell from you, because it is building land it is necessarily fit to be the subject of a scheme. I understood you to say, I may have taken you wrongly, that it was building land, and consequently it was a fit subject for a scheme.

The Inspector : What I rather suggested to Mr. Stevenson was this : the question of restrictions did not concern us, the question being whether or not it was likely to be used for building purposes. He had already admitted it was, and was elaborating the point beyond what was necessary.

Mr. Stevenson (representing the North-eastern Railway Company) : I am suffering a little from ignorance of the procedure. It is difficult to draw the line between the two stages.

The Inspector : The Board really wants information on one point in relation to whether this land comes within the Act as land likely to be used for building purposes or is in course of development, and also whether the Corporation make out a *prima facie* case for permission.

Mr. Stevenson : We think it is unfair to take one little piece, and we are wondering why it was chosen.

The Inspector: I think the opposition ought to concern themselves with two points, the one is to show that the land is either unlikely to be used for building purposes, or secondly that it is not necessary to include this part of Gosforth in order that the other part of Newcastle may be properly developed.

Mr. Stevenson: I have given you the land there which I think will be developed; I have not laboured that because the plan speaks for itself.

The Inspector: You can communicate that in your concluding remarks.

Mr. Holmes: May I ask Mr. Shortt one question, sir? I was under the impression I was ruled out on one question I wished to put.

The Inspector: You understand the limitations of this Enquiry?

Mr. Stevenson: Yes.

The Inspector: You will have to get notice, and you will have to have another Enquiry and another Conference with the Authority before the details are considered.

Mr. Holmes: Dealing with the land on the east side of the line, the North-eastern land, will you, from the point of view of the Corporation, Mr. Shortt, be satisfied if that part in Newcastle was subject to a scheme, or do the Corporation, as far as they can, insist that the land in Gosforth must also be subject to the scheme?

Mr. Shortt (Chairman of the Newcastle Corporation Town Planning Committee): As far as the Corporation can, but of course they are anxious to work with Gosforth, so much so that I do not care whether Gosforth is the Authority to deal with it or we are, so far as the Corporation can, they would insist upon both being town planned, both that inside and that outside.

The Inspector: Perhaps I may ask the question that would help Mr. Holmes. Do you consider that the inclusion of this part of Gosforth is necessary in the interests of the part of Newcastle to the scheme for that part of Newcastle?

Mr. Shortt: I do.

The Inspector: You consider it desirable that the two parts ought to be town planned together?

Mr. Shortt: Quite.

The Inspector: Your reason for saying you think Gosforth should be included is on the question of access—I am now dealing with the east side?

Mr. Shortt: It is very much more desirable that we should town plan the whole lot from the point of view of maintaining the amenities of the district. The two main features are intercommunication and

the preservation of the amenities, and the third point is still there under the Act, but we are not pressing it ; I refer to the question of sanitation, but we do not press that. We press intercommunication and the amenities of the district.

Mr. Holmes : I do not know whether this question is allowable ; perhaps you will stop me if not. Will the scheme contain provisions affecting building by-laws and so forth in Gosforth ?

The Inspector : If they care to answer it, they may.

The Deputy Town Clerk : What the scheme will contain it is impossible for us to say. It is possible it may.

The Inspector : I think you had better not discuss details in the interests of both of you.

Mr. Shortt : It will contain nothing that the Gosforth Council have not the opportunity of considering and going through and giving their views upon it, and helping us on.

The Inspector : That is why it is a pity to raise it to-day.

Another area of about 1,400 acres at the east end of the city is being considered with regard to the preparation of a town planning scheme, but no definite information is yet to hand.

PATRICK ABERCROMBIE.