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FROM: PETER N BELL
BRITISH SECRETARY
29 OCTOBER 1998

cc: See Distribution List

MR FISHER

LOCATION OF THE BIIGS - (ALMOST) A DEAL

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31/10

Summary

We spoke. As I would have reported at PUS' Co-ordinating Group today, subject to the blessing of Dublin and minor technical points, I believe we have a deal in Windsor House. The Secretariat and Office Services need now to resolve outstanding details as a matter of high priority. Likewise contingency planning to accommodate personnel if refurbishment etc is not sufficiently advanced to allow a march in by 1 January. Though Danesfort does not seem a runner, perhaps we should not withdraw our bid immediately?

2. After our latest visit to Windsor House yesterday morning and less than comradely exchanges the previous night, David Donoghue told me that he was content in principle with a move to Windsor House, subject to the approval of Dublin (which he regards as a relative formality) and the satisfactory resolution of a number of relatively minor, almost technical issues. If so, we have secured a deal based on floors 13 and 14 plus roughly two-thirds of the 20th floor. Floor 13 would be for the Irish side; floor 14 would be for common facilities (dining rooms, meeting rooms, reception space, kitchen etc) and the British side accommodated on the 20th floor. The outstanding issues include the following: Donoghue attaches particular importance to the early finalisation of the necessary lease(s); confirmation that our premises would be accessible before 7.00 am and after 8.00 pm; and the details of car parking space. He would also (and rightly) wish to be satisfied on the technical arrangements for a high, restaurant quality kitchen and ancillary facilities.

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3. Could you, in collaboration with Eric Taylor and Office Services, please ensure **as a matter of high priority that all necessary steps are taken to resolve all these relatively detailed matters as soon as possible**. Our DOE colleague promised a range of other information by close of play yesterday. If we have not already received this, could you please chase?

Contingency planning

4. It is not yet clear whether we can take possession of Windsor House on 1 December or 1 January. Please can you also **take, in collaboration with colleagues, whatever action is necessary to help us to move in/start refurbishment as soon after 1 December as possible?** At the same time, I should be grateful if you could **develop a contingency plan to ensure that both sides are out of Maryfield by 31 December**. Our planning assumption should be 18 December - and the British side **must** be out by then. But, not least since we will be in the fallowest period of the year, when official presence will be minimal, I would regard the Irish date as negotiable up to, but not beyond 31 December. **This plan should cover accommodation as well as working facilities.**

5. Personally, I would not instruct the VLA to drop our bid for Danesfort until the Windsor House bid is irrevocably in our hand. However, I tend to concur with the Agency that the lessors are simply playing us along. (Their response to our latest bid for a single floor has provoked a response offering us, reports Eric Taylor, floors 2 and 3 on a 20 year lease? They cannot, I believe, be serious.)

6. It would be my hope and expectation that everything that is within our power to deliver has been done **by the end of the week**. Apart from ensuring the logistics of Monday's Ministerial meeting, this is our collective top responsibility.

Signed:
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