



Association of University Directors of Estates
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By e-mail to:
barkerreview@hm-treasury.gov.uk

Carmel Howard
Barker Review Team

Dear Carmel

This letter is the response of the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE) to the call for evidence of the Barker review of Land Use Planning.

AUDE exists to promote excellence in the strategic planning, management, operation and development of higher education (HE) estates and facilities. Its members are the universities and higher education colleges of the United Kingdom, represented by the Director of Estates, or equivalent. Currently all UK universities (except one) are AUDE members, plus fifteen HE colleges.

Higher Education is a major economic generator, supporting research, teaching and technology transfer. As you will be aware, the Government recognises through its support, the essential role of university research and technology transfer to the future success of the UK in the world economy - and in its participation target, the vital role of higher education to our young people.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in this country are very varied, from those competing at world class level, to those whose primary focus is on regional development and supporting their local community.

In property terms, university estates are similarly varied; ancient universities like Oxford and Cambridge have internationally important heritage buildings and very different property portfolios to universities in major urban conurbations, those in the green belt and universities in redevelopment areas. Many higher education institutions have a mixture of property in terms of age and type, from historic through to very modern. It is true to say that across the country, the majority of HEIs have a large number of buildings dating from the 1960's and 70's, which are now in need of major refurbishment or replacement.

The property assets (especially sports facilities) of many institutions are used by local communities and universities in general have a marked impact upon their local area, with

many being substantial local employers, contributing in a major way to local economies and greatly affecting regional infrastructure.

As an indication of the size of the UK higher education estate, in 2004 it comprised 24.9 million m² of gross space, with a total annual estimated property revenue cost of £1,552 million and a total insurance replacement value of £38.9 billion (HEFCE report 2006/06).

The experience of HE institutions in terms of the planning system is varied. Most will have developed estate strategies and, in doing so, will have engaged with the planning authorities. In best case scenarios the university estates strategy is formally endorsed by the planning authorities and incorporated in relevant plans. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there may be informal agreement at a strategic level, but then individual planning applications are frustrated by the process and by changed local policies.

Higher education institutions generally find themselves treated like private sector developers in the planning process, despite Government policies. In the worst cases they have Section 106 obligations imposed upon them, when, as part of the public sector, it would be more appropriate for HEIs to receive benefit from others. HEIs find themselves having to compete with the private sector for property or land acquisition, which can make future planning very problematic, especially in high value areas.

Some of the most difficult cases arise where higher education institutions are seeking to rationalise their estates and dispose of assets in one location, to reinvest in another. Frequently they are hampered by planning policies and by Section 106 requirements which do not recognise the value to the community of the new investment. Nor is this recognised in the proposed Planning Gain Supplement.

Many institutions have property assets across several local authorities and they find inconsistencies of policy and approach between them. This is particularly noticeable in London in terms of the approach to student residential accommodation, where different boroughs have different views, some sensibly viewing it as part of the overall housing need; others not.

We would therefore wish to see a greater emphasis, indeed an obligation, on planning authorities to work with higher education institutions, to understand and support their strategic plans and to agree sustainable strategic planning frameworks with them. Many published plans carry little, if any, detail in terms of support for HEIs. In an ideal world, we would wish to see local authorities willing to use their compulsory purchase powers to assist the future development of institutions within their area, within an agreed planning framework.

The University of Surrey recently managed to convert its extant 1965 planning permission to a more secure outline planning permission for the land that was in the green belt. This has secured its future and provided it with a framework to be able to respond to new opportunities. However to achieve this through the Local Plan route took 6 years and incurred substantial cost.

In developing frameworks, we would wish to see planning authorities take a flexible approach, as the best currently do. Some however fall back on inflexible statements in

Local Plans. In the case of one recent university development in the green belt, this resulted in a more intrusive building, but met the Green Belt Planning Policy.

Despite the aim of the planning system to involve key stakeholders as much as possible, it can often prove difficult for higher education institutions to take part in what is a "front-loaded" system. Making representations on Local Development Frameworks, the London Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Government Guidance, all of which may have implications for the future development of HEIs, can be expensive. Many institutions may not have sufficient resources - especially those with property in several local authority areas, the situation in London being particularly problematic.

Similarly transport plans very rarely include an understanding of the needs of higher education institutions and there is currently inadequate connection between the planning system and transport and highway planning.

For universities to meet Government policies and be sustainable many across the country are seeking to increase or rationalise their student housing. It would be enormously helpful to most HEIs if student accommodation were classed as affordable housing. In a similar way, the fact that many university lecturers fall into a low salary bracket, could be acknowledged with a key worker classification for the purpose of their housing provision.

The importance of the knowledge economy means that higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering research, innovation and technology transfer. In response many have developed science and enterprise parks to provide for new start-up companies, or incubator units on campus. Flexible accommodation arrangements are a crucial issue for fledgling companies, yet start-up firms 'spun out' by universities can struggle with inflexible lease terms and high costs. The planning system needs to provide for more flexible employment floor space specially tailored to new and growing enterprises.

It is important for the future development and prosperity of higher education institutions, that their property portfolio can respond more quickly to changes in research and teaching programmes and to funding and business opportunities. New buildings often rely on external funding and private benefactors, resulting in short development timescales. Higher education institutions are key to the future economy and would wish to support any improvements in this regard.

AUDE welcomes the Barker review. Our members have a wealth of experience and expertise in estates and facilities management and we would be more than happy to assist further if you have any queries or would like more information. You can contact the Association via our Executive Officer, Suzanne (T. 01206 873068, E. sirwin@essex.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Britton', written in a cursive style.

Simon Britton, Chairman AUDE