

Our Ref: JFB/WJT

28 March 2006

Mr Barker  
Barker Review Team  
r/E1  
1 Horseguard's Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

Dear Mr Barker

This letter is the response of the University of Warwick to the call for comment on the Barker review of Land Use Planning.

The implementation of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, has in theory, introduced a system which is meant to be a more flexible approach to planning. The impression however is a system which is in a state of flux as it tries to adapt to new procedures and practices. A major concern is the complexity and number of documents that are required to be submitted with a planning application, the preparation of which, are both time consuming to produce and costly.

The inter-relationship between the different levels of land use planning are still emerging. In principle we endorse the regional spatial planning process as we believe this helps provide a strategic overview, however, it is essential that the various regional plans, the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy in particular, are fully integrated. As an example, while Higher Education is seen to be a major economic driver, growth at this Institution is currently restricted by Green Belt policies. This is recognised by Government Office West Midlands, but there is frustration with a system that is unable to respond in a reasonable timeframe; the RSS/ LDF process taking at least 5-7 years to deliver removal from the green belt. It is likely that this will impact on future growth.

A feature of the RSS is the apparent wish to develop hi-tech corridors and business clusters but it has to be questioned whether such strategies are too focussed on economic spin-offs associated with HE Institutions, while apparently ignoring that the institutions themselves are important socio-economic engines in their own right. It is to be hoped that this may change with the development of the Science City initiatives.

At a local planning level, HEIs often 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 to receive benefit from others. Many local development plans carry little, if any, detail in terms of support for HEIs.

In addition, the importance of the knowledge economy means that HEIs play a crucial role in fostering research, innovation and technology transfer. New building projects often rely on external funding and private benefactors, resulting in short development timescales. It is important therefore, for the future development and prosperity of HEIs, that planning policies allow that property portfolios can respond quickly to changes in research and teaching programmes and to funding and business opportunities.

We would therefore wish to see a greater emphasis; perhaps an obligation, on planning authorities to work with HEIs, to understand and support their strategic plans and to agree sustainable strategic planning frameworks with them.

The University of Warwick welcomes the Barker review. It is our strongly held view that Higher Education Institutions are key to the future economy and would wish to support any improvements in the above areas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JF Baldwin', followed by a period.

Jon F Baldwin  
Registrar