



Barker Review of Land Use Planning
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Secretary:

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29th September 2006

Dear Sir/Madam

Barker Review of Land Use Planning – Interim Report

As you recall representations on the above were sent to you on behalf of the West Midlands Metropolitan Area in accordance with the deadline of 19th September. These were sent on the basis that it was an officer response sent by the Chief Engineers and Planning Officers Group and that the West Midlands Planning and Transportation (P&T) Sub-Committee was scheduled to formally consider it on 22nd September 2006. The West Midlands P&T Sub-Committee comprises senior elected members from the seven Metropolitan Authorities and the Passenger Transport Authority.

At this meeting members broadly endorsed the contents of the officer response but wish to make the following additional observations and I would be grateful if you would take them into account when framing your final recommendations.

The recognition that there is no intention to radically overhaul the planning system is welcome, as is acknowledgement that the planning system has a sustainable development remit, which seeks to address environmental and social issues as well as helping deliver economic growth.

It is considered that current Compulsory Purchase Order arrangements, particularly for major infrastructure schemes, are too cumbersome and time consuming, which lead to delays and cost escalations that potentially jeopardise plan led comprehensive regeneration schemes. Any final recommendations that simplify these arrangements will be particularly welcome. In a similar vein, the length of time that it takes for funding to be released for major infrastructure projects, particularly major schemes in the West Midlands Local Transport Plan, delays major area wide regeneration initiatives.

The final report should make greater emphasis on the key role that joint working arrangements have in improving the performance of the planning system. In the West Midlands Metropolitan Area strategic land use planning and transportation matters with cross boundary ramifications are considered in an integrated and coordinated manner by the Sub-Committee and coordination should be enhanced further via our current City Region initiative.

The Sub-Committee wish to reiterate the point made in the officer report which identified the benefits of the current 'town centres first approach' to major retailing and other trip generating development. This policy has worked well in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area and the Sub-Committee is of the view that it should not be diluted.

I trust that these comments are of assistance and look forward to your final recommendations later in the year. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Les Kyles', with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Les Kyles

Chairman, West Midlands Planning and Transportation Sub-Committee