

NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM MEETING: 9 MARCH 2006 ITEM 3

DISCUSSION NOTE ON BARKER II REMIT AND CALL FOR EVIDENCE

1. The publication of its remit and the call for evidence gives the opportunity to think strategically about what needs to come out of Baker II. The NPF is uniquely placed to take a view from a cross-sectoral perspective. This paper gives initial suggestions for debate at the Forum meeting.

2. We might start by considering whether we'd like to see further fundamental change, or whether we feel that at this stage it would be better to concentrate on smaller adjustments to make the new system work better. In considering this, members will want to bear in mind the impact of the new planning agenda. For example is it resulting in a more, similar, or less, healthy planning culture; in more, a similar level of, or less, certainty for business; and in better, similar, or worse, outcomes; or is it too early to judge?

3. We could go on to consider issues that the Barker review might address, for example, whether:

- there is a robust evidence base for policy and plan-making at all levels?
- the most pressing issues currently are societal/governmental, or systemic/professional?
- the European concept of productivity should be used, rather than the more narrowly focussed US model?
- there a potential disconnect between economic planning and spatial planning?
- certainty is more important in the planning process than speed, or vice versa?
- we need more planning, or less?
- local government is fit for purpose?
- government is sufficiently joined up nationally (across Government Departments and Agencies)?
- national government articulates smoothly with regional and local levels of government/agencies?
- the planning system can be viewed as mechanism that could provide a context for change management?

4. We could go on to consider how it might be possible to:

- improve the quality of planning at all levels
- improve delivery, in particular at a sub-regional scale
- ensure that planning becomes more effective in the delivery of infrastructure and coping with the effects of climate change

5. There is substantial evidence available already that was used to inform the development of the new planning system – for example submissions to, and findings of, the House of Commons DTLR/ODPM Select Committee on planning. Is there research, or are there reports or other material available on the current situation, which could provide information of relevance to the Barker II review?

6. Finally, there will be an opportunity to consider whether there is any common ground about the remit of the Barker II review amongst NPF members that could, for example, be reflected in the note of meeting.