

# URBAN FUTURES

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18<sup>th</sup> January 2007

Sir Michael Lyons, esq.,

electronically only

Dear Sir Michael

## **Considering the Implications of Eddington, Barker and Leitch**

The following is a summary response in a private capacity and additional to the response to the above which will be forwarded by the RICS, for whom I Chair the Land Use & Transport Panel.

The Questions for Stakeholders under the above title was a wonderful summation of the key points of relevance from the Barker and Eddington Reports, to which the summarised RICS response will no doubt do justice.

My summary of these two reports was that they were almost entirely saying that Government needs to be better at taking decisions through better use of resources and should assist the better delivery of outputs from these decisions by more effective delivery mechanisms i.e. local authorities; hence the importance of your report.

## **Areas of Relevance**

Delivery of the Built Environment and local area service delivery; from transport to major strategic property projects to voluntary sector services

## **Relevant Background**

Chartered Surveyor motivated by the Garden City Movement, JS Mill and Michael Heseltine's interventionist but still monetarist based approach to policy.

1987 to 1994 - promoting major public private partnerships. Many of the UDC areas were formed around the regeneration schemes I worked on.

1992 to 2002 – Birmingham Settlement Trustee

1992 to 1994 - Industrial & Provident Society SPV used to attempt to purchase / joint venture on the parking assets of Birmingham, Coventry and Plymouth City Councils.

Invited and declined to apply for CEO of the Coventry TCM Co.

1994 to 1996 - Commercial Director of a UDC

1996 - Ceased trying to work in partnership with the public sector due to its lack of strategic honesty or ability to deliver major projects.

1996 to present – advising major property owners on their large UK developments - see attached.

1997-1998 – UK Region Director of a US parking and transport company.

1996 to present – member of RICS Land Use & Transport Committee:

- Transport Development Areas
- Home Zone Guidance document – Returning Roads to Residents - ICE publication
- Funding London's Infrastructure – RICS publication

Managing Change in the Urban Economy Through Property & its Environment Since 1993

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## Summary Comments: from General to Specific

1. Local Government will only ever deliver to the extent that Central Government allows it to. The greater the clarity of leadership from Central Government, the greater the ability for Local Government to deliver.
2. The key issue for local government in respect of the strategic decisions on land use & transport planning, is that Government creates policies that are able to work together.
3. UK is a small and well understood environment. Local Government must not be a home for developing the policies of national Government.
4. There are fundamental structural faults inherent within government policy. Green growth is the major issue closely followed by any form of clarity on the London issue as a hub within the UK economy and what this means for the provision of transport and regional economic planning.
  - e.g. Eddington had GG as its reason for being, yet it did not attempt to rationalise this, nor explore the dichotomy of how government should best support modes of travel that fit within the UK's economic geography and recognise the green growth and travel to work issues inherent in planning a structure and a geography for local government.
  - Why is rail travel becoming more expensive when car and air travel have become cheaper within Central Government's delivery, management and tax regimes?
  - Why has there been no leadership from central government on the massively significant issue of pricing of journeys between locations which will alter the relative attraction of locations?
  - This oversight is particularly inexcusable in the light of European Transport policies and the technical solutions available, which provided a clear route map 10 years ago?
  - Central government must give clarity on the impact of the direction and purpose of planning policies in a political sense not just policy, if local democracy is to stand chance of working more efficiently within a defined remit.
5. It must remain clear that Central Government must take responsibility for a national vision and not delegate the problems to local government.
6. All Local Authority funded bodies must remain branded as such and run as such.
7. There has been a ludicrous proliferation of bodies that effectively undermine the expenditure available for and the quality that must remain in the accountable democratic body of the local authority. Plus take in too much overhead from other bodies.
8. The recent City Development Company consultation, can only surely be relevant within the Lyons report structure, not in advance of it.
9. City Development Companies should not in my opinion exist separately from being effectively an accountable action team, within an English Partnership, asset holding through to area wide management and street cleaning strategic delivery body.
10. The current local authority areas of delivery could remain but strategic planning and responsibility for all the functional services of the built environment and transport should be removed to City region style bodies with high quality staff and a remit to work within strategic plans.
11. Transport – analysis of the regional requirements for transport provides an excellent framework and in many cases a shorthand for establishing the appropriate city region boundaries.

12. Travel to Work Areas, are an excellent mechanism for devising the geographic remit for local government authorities
13. Confidence in the opportunities provided through excellent directly employed staff who have real world delivery experience (successfully !) and the commissioning of excellent legal agreements should be perhaps the greatest new requirement for local government as it relates the built environment.
14. The entirety of built environment functions, similar to the EP format – but critically with the operational management of services, should be separated out into regional strategic delivery structures, leaving local authorities as currently to deal with local and community consents and issues.
15. Employment Contracts - The key resource and the motivations of Local Government are tied up in their staff. Employment contracts, staffing restrictions and performance indicators must be shaped to the strategic objectives of a life limited body.
  - e.g. UDC staff are still employed doing fundamentally the same things as they were 15 years ago, which is in direct conflict with the objectives of the UDC bodies to dispose of their assets.
16. Birmingham City Council proved particularly effective as it ran the defined metropolitan area.
17. Local Authority expenditures on economic self promotion must be limited; e.g. Bradford MDC marketing itself to the property community - this reveals a lack of expenditure control and a lack of understanding of the audience and markets they are targeting.
18. Rural areas: need to be understood and their local authorities empowered to be different form those in City regions, not a sub-set, although this is partly inevitable.
19. Local Authorities should look to the Settlement movement for the provision of umbrella service bodies that can deliver to the grass routes.
20. Birmingham Settlement has some excellent examples of services it delivered but which have proven increasingly difficult due to the lack of funding available to the relatively modest overhead of the organisation. The contrast with the resources for overhead of BCC is extreme.
21. Acknowledgement of the 21 different services it ran 10 years ago compared with today is a sad indictment of the one size fits all local authority and an example of why there must be separation between local authorities that are strategic and regional and resourced as such and that must allow community oriented local authorities to work efficiently with voluntary service providers and others.

Never doubt that what you are doing is anything other than the re-shaping the relationship between the 45% of the GNP that is in the public sector and the lives of the ordinary citizen, wherever they are employed.

Yours sincerely



**Jonathan Naughton**