

Sir Michael Lyons
Lyons Inquiry
Room 3/12
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Our ref: RW/CH
Date: 22 January 2007
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By letter and email

Dear Sir Michael

RESPONSE TO THE EXTENDED LYONS INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Thank you for your consultation paper regarding your extended Inquiry. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to your review at this stage, and hope you will find our comments useful.

I provide, attached to this letter, our detailed responses to those questions that we feel pertinent, as laid out in your consultation paper. However, I provide here some overarching comments, which I hope you will take into account.

We have already contributed to the early stages of your own inquiry into local government and local government finance. With regard to the three additional studies that you are now considering, we generally welcome the content and proposals of Eddington, and give a cautious welcome to Barker. Leitch is more difficult to evaluate in the context of your review and the tying-in of planning, transportation, and regeneration generally, particularly as it is not as clear nor as concise in its recommendations as the other two reviews!

We detect a conflict in part between Eddington and Barker, to which there is no simple answer. This is particularly significant for local authorities in urban areas, such as Derby. Barker's views that we have too much greenbelt in the UK, and her suggestion that we should relax our requirements for proving the need for out-of-town and Greenfield development, do not sit comfortably with Eddington's proposals that support the move towards city regions in planning and transportation terms and the need to concentrate on 'pinch points'.

Generally, we feel that Eddington's recommendations address the urban transportation and urban development issues in a more joined-up manner than the equivalent elements of the Barker recommendations. We are very concerned that if the Barker view prevails, we could be hit with out-of-town development, increased traffic congestion across the urban areas, increased CO² emissions, and moves that seem to go against Barker's 'Keep the town centre first' recommendation.

/continued overleaf

Your questions regarding convening are not easy to answer section by section, and so we provide our comment here. We are already linking the policy work of our planners, engineers and economic development team in our LDF, LTP and Community Strategy work. We would expect to see an increase in partnership work between local authorities and their partners through the evolving Local Strategic Partnerships and their sustainable community strategies, together with the relaxing of funding régimes through the slowly emerging Local Area Agreements. We have been a pilot LAA, and have had many lengthy discussions with our government office regarding the imbalance between their requirements and ours in the LAA - we would welcome the day when the direct benefits to the local authority and the LSP become more apparent!

We have also participated in the compilation of the SIGOMA response, and are generally in agreement with their views as expressed in a draft outline dated 10 January. Should we have anything to add when we receive SIGOMA's input to your review, we will get back to you.

We would generally support practical ideas to further reform plan-making at the local level, so that plans can be delivered more rapidly. We welcome the relaxation in the requirements for the Statement of Community Involvement, contained in the recently published Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.

I would like to take a little additional time to consult with our Director of Children and Young People Services, regarding the proposals in Leitch so far as they relate to mainstream education. This is because my role has tended to be in the work-related areas of employment and training, particularly in relation to the targeting of disadvantaged communities in Derby for relevant training and job-search assistance, to help them to compete on a level playing field for the jobs. We will get back to you as quickly as possible with any further comments once I have had a conversation with our Director of Children and Young People Services.

Yours sincerely

Richard Williams
Assistant Director – Regeneration