

RIBA response to Barker Review of Housing Supply

The final report and recommendations of Kate Barker's Review of Housing Supply – Delivering Stability: Securing our Future Housing Needs was published by HM Treasury this morning to coincide with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget Statement. Today's report follows the publication of Kate Barker's interim report in December 2003.

The report contains a detailed analysis of the issues affecting housing supply and 36 detailed recommendations. Among the findings and recommendations of most interest to the Royal Institute of British Architects are:

- A recognition that the same development control process should not apply to all development. She proposes additional routes for developers to choose between when applying for permission: outline applications containing more detail than currently required, or a design code route
- Further reform to encourage greater redevelopment of unused brownfield land
- Support for a planning-gain supplement payable on the granting of planning permission (rather than support for harmonised VAT on construction) with possible lower rates for development on brownfield land
- Measures to encourage faster build-out rates by setting time limits on planning permissions
- A proposed code of best practice agreed between the industry and CABI on the external design of new houses with possible CABI arbitration in disputes between planners and housebuilders on design issues.

Responding to the report, RIBA President George Ferguson said:

“The Barker Review contains good news and bad news for architecture and the built environment. On the positive side, I am pleased that Kate Barker has recognised the place of design quality in addressing our future housing needs, together with the need to maximise the use of brownfield land.

“I am disappointed that Kate Barker does not support harmonised VAT across all forms of construction. Her analysis fails to consider refurbishment and changes of use, and appears to be based upon potential taxation receipts rather than broader urban and environmental issues. While the proposed planning-gain supplement looks interesting, care will need to be taken to ensure that it does not create a taxation double-whammy alongside VAT for those seeking permission for refurbishment and changes of use. Adaptive re-use of existing buildings should be excluded from any form of windfall tax.”

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Notes to editors:

1. The Barker Review is published in full on the HM Treasury website at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations_and_legislation/barker/consult_barker_index.cfm
2. For further information, please contact RIBA Public Affairs Co-ordinator Steven Harding on 020 7307 3728 or steven.harding@inst.riba.org.

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