



## **Business In Sport and Leisure Limited**

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## **The Barker Review of Land-Use Planning**

### **A Response by Business In Sport and Leisure (BISL)**

#### **Introduction**

**Business In Sport and Leisure (BISL).** An umbrella organisation for over 100 companies in the private sector sport and leisure industry and many consultants who specialise in this field. Members of BISL listed on the London Stock Exchange have a combined market capitalisation in excess of £40 billion.

Business In Sport and Leisure has a long established working group on property and land-use planning. We respond on a regular basis to consultations on such issues as Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs), Upward Only Rent Reviews; Business Rates Revaluation; Transitional Relief, Planning Obligations and most recently on the Planning Gain Supplement.

#### **The Sport, Leisure and Hospitality Industry**

The sport, leisure, hospitality and tourism industry is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest industry in the UK which generates £74 billion to the UK economy. This equates to 7% of GDP. It provides jobs for some 2.1 million people; 6.1% of the total workforce. Many of these jobs offer flexibility for women and others looking for part time work. The low barriers to entry are important to the social interaction of the local community.

Members of BISL on the whole provide their activities through facilities which require planning permission. These include:

- Health and Fitness to Swimming Pools
- Hotels to Restaurants
- Pubs, Bars and nightclubs
- Cinema and Ten pin bowling
- Bingo, betting and casinos
- Motorway Services to Fast Food
- Greyhound Racing to Race Tracks
- Health and Fitness Clubs to indoor tennis

Obtaining planning permission is therefore essential to the health of this sector and yet it is seen by members of BISL as the greatest barrier to expansion. There is strong evidence that as a result companies are looking for overseas expansion.

## **The Barriers**

**Local Development Frameworks and Regional Spatial Strategies** Very few local authorities identify sites for leisure and tourism in Local Development Frameworks (LDF). As a result many leisure and tourism developments are delayed as they are considered contrary to the LDF and therefore have to be referred to the regional Government Office and often ODPM for resolution. In part this is due to the wide diversity of developments which make up leisure, hospitality and tourism, but is also due to a lack of understanding of our sector by local authority planners. Very little training is undertaken in mainstream planning courses on planning for leisure and tourism and despite the efforts of industry it is difficult to attract the attention of planners to encourage them to want to know more.

**Employment Land:** The ODPM statement in late 2005 urging local authorities to re-assess sites identified for 'employment' use and in particular allocate them to housing does not help the sport, leisure and tourism industry. The value of sites identified for housing is far higher than sport and leisure developments can afford to pay and yet these sites are often the most suitable sites for sport and leisure uses.

**Customer v Local Authority Expectation:** There is often a divergence between customer and local authority expectation. For example a local authority will look for a prestigious four star hotel when the customer demand is for a budget hotel.

**PPS 6 (Town Centres):** BISL has been arguing for some time about the effect of the new PPS6 (town centres and retail) on the competitiveness of the private sector sport and leisure industry. PPS 6 identifies health and fitness as a suitable town centre use. . As private sector indoor sport, leisure and tennis centres run by such operators as David Lloyd Leisure, Esporta and Next Generation include an element of health and fitness, they are being treated by local planning authorities as health and fitness clubs under PPS 6. All other multi sports clubs in local authority ownership are dealt with under PPG 17 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation). Despite Ministerial support for a change from DCMS, ODPM have refused to provide a Ministerial statement or Ministerial correspondence which could be used to clarify the situation. The need for change has been supported by the publication of 'The Carter Report' commissioned by the Secretary of State at DCMS and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and is also mentioned in a yet unpublished PWC report for ODPM considering the future management of local authority sports and leisure facilities.

## **The Solutions**

If the sport, leisure and tourism industry is to continue to grow and in the case of tourism reach the Government's target of being worth £100 billion by 2010, it is essential that the economic barriers to growth posed by the planning system are assessed and removed.

**Good Practice Guide to Planning for Tourism:** The industry awaits the publication of the Good Practice Guide to Planning for Tourism which ODPM are expected to publish in the spring. In due course this will replace PPG 21 (Tourism), but not before we hope the impact of the Good Practice Guide will have been assessed. ODPM believe that the Good Practice Guide will be a 'material consideration' in planning law which is essential to the industry if it is to be successful. It is absolutely essential that there is strong ministerial support for the Guide and that ODPM publicise it as widely as possible. BISL is grateful for the strong support given by DCMS to ensure that this Guide promotes the importance of the tourism industry. This was very much required after the publication of the first draft which was unacceptable and would have been damaging if published.

**Regional Spatial Strategies:** The Tourism Alliance, of which BISL is a member, wrote to all Regional Assemblies in 2005 offering to provide tourism input into the new RSS. We received little response. BISL commends the recent DCMS initiative where officials will be meeting with all Regional Cultural Consortia, Tourism Boards and Government Offices in the Region to stress the importance of tourism and their inclusion in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

## **In Conclusion**

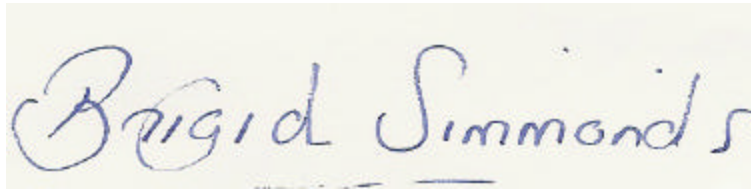
BISL acknowledge that the relationship of the sport, leisure and tourism industry with the land use planning system is two way. The planning system clearly has a role in protecting and maintaining the environment in both urban and rural areas. We also recognise that the planning system performs a difficult role in seeking to reconcile a range of competing interests for land and development, of which sport, leisure and tourism is just one.

There are clear signs however, that there is very little attention paid to proactive planning for this sector at a local or regional level. There is very little cross-departmental activity between planning officers and sport or tourism officers and too often our sector is seen as an industry of little value despite its clear economic importance and importance to the social fabric of our society.

There is a perception that local authority planning departments are just too busy dealing with live planning applications to pay the necessary attention to the needs of our industry and the proactive role they must lead if sport, leisure,

hospitality and tourism developments are to be embedded into their policies and LPF. Unless this changes our sector will continue to be inhibited in further development and in their significant contribution to the UK economy.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Brigid Simmonds" in a cursive, flowing script.

**Brigid Simmonds**  
Chief Executive

24<sup>th</sup> March 2006