

Eddington's planning proposals are a recipe for civil disobedience

Whilst some of Rod Eddington's planning proposals have merit, notably a Statement of Strategic Objectives, the notion of a 'presumption in favour' of major infrastructure projects would run counter to principles of democracy and sustainability ('Planning commission could take ministers out of the loop in transport scheme approval' *LTT* 14 Dec 06). If adopted, such a ruling would set in concrete the iniquitous system of motorway and trunk road planning of the last 70 years, whereby schemes entering the national roads programme, now re-titled the Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI), are regarded by ministers as national policy. Ministers deny that TPI status represents a presumption in favour but that is what it is in effect.

A task of the proposed Independent Planning Commission to conduct public inquiries into schemes already decided in principle by ministers would mirror the charade of current trunk roads inquiries whereby the role of the inquiry inspector is nothing more than to report local concerns over schemes promoted and decided by the minister. Of the hundreds of trunk roads schemes that have been through the public inquiry machine over the decades the numbers of schemes where the Inspector has made a recommendation against can be counted on one hand.

Although Eddington says that a list/programme of transport infrastructure schemes published alongside the Statement of Strategic Objectives would be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment, how would a presumption in favour square with the requirement for subsequent detailed assessment of individual projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive? In cases where significant adverse effects are identified, would the requirement to consider possible alternatives be overridden by an overarching policy to build?

The wholly undemocratic system of trunk roads planning led to the disruption of road inquiries in the 1970s and to a roads protest movement and large-scale direct action in the 1990s. If the Government adopts Eddington's full package, sheer frustration over the imposition of damaging roads and airport expansion on local communities could once again result in mass civil disobedience.

Denise Carlo
Norwich NR2

Barker's plan to axe parking standards will fuel our car culture

For those who believe that new development should have a positive impact on transport emissions, environmental quality and inclusive accessibility, December 2006 produced bad news. First, the new planning guidance on housing (PPS3) abandons the national policy attempt to limit car parking provision in new housing ('Parking standards stripped from housing guidance' *LTT* 14 Dec 06). It is true that the first attempt in PPG3 was hopelessly ambiguous but it did provoke planning authorities into thinking about parking provision and did encourage awareness that excessive parking encourages car-based lifestyles and reduces environmental quality for a given density of building. The policy should have been made clearer, not abolished.

Second, Kate Barker's review of land use

planning calls for "more flexible" national maximum parking standards for office development that were so hard-won in the 1998 version of PPG13 ('Scrap parking standards for new shops and offices says Barker' *ibid*). She does this without any discussion of the issues that led to the establishment of these maxima in the first place and apparently without research into their effects. Incidentally, other non-residential development is left out of the recommendation. Does this mean she favours retaining the maximum parking standards for retail, cinemas and educational establishments, or have these just been left out by mistake? Of course, the Government is not bound to adopt such off-the-cuff recommendations but the backtracking on residential parking maxima does not give cause for comfort.

The Government had acknowledged (following research projects for which I was project manager at Llewelyn Davies) not only the case for lower levels of parking but also the importance of consistent maximum levels between local areas and regions. Without national maximum parking levels many local authorities will be able to allow developments with high levels of parking as a way of competing with other authorities that are trying to pursue social and environmental objectives. In this way bad practice will be rewarded and good practice will be undermined.

Low levels of parking provision do not in themselves produce good developments and have to be combined with land-use location policy to balance accessibility requirements with transport provision. But overarching national limits to parking provision encourage developers and investors to seek out schemes with an appropriate balance and to put aside aspirations for car-based schemes. Without this encouragement the proliferation of retail, business and leisure developments in locations that cannot be easily reached except by car will continue. On the housing side also, building to layouts and densities that can be served by high quality local services and public transport could now prove even harder to achieve.

Tim Pharoah
London



Out-of-town car-based development would be encouraged if the Government accepted Sir Rod Eddington's recommendation of road pricing and Kate Barker's call for parking standards to be relaxed, says Chris Wood

Where's the land-use dimension to Eddington's transport prescription?

What a brilliant combination Eddington and Barker are! Sir Rod Eddington's report on the economically efficient arrangement of deckchairs on the Titanic throws its weight behind congestion charging. Drivers will choose to use less congested routes (and go to less congested destinations). Kate Barker, meanwhile, calls for maximum parking standards and for restrictions on out-of-town developments to be removed – just in time to satisfy the pressure for dispersed development fuelled by cost-conscious drivers avoiding congested destinations.

What is even more brilliant is the way in which all of this is spun to appear to contribute to carbon-reduction, when it will actually do the opposite.

Chris Wood
Norwich NR1

Sir Rod's enthusiasm for road pricing is ill-informed

The Eddington report comes to the conclusion that substantial road building programme would be required even if a comprehensive system of road pricing were in force ('Road pricing: an economic "no brainer" but the politics remain tricky' *LTT* 14 Dec 06). That conclusion might be correct if road pricing were the only effective and appropriate method of traffic limitation, which is what Sir Rod appears to believe. He says: "Relying on congestion to affect behaviour and allocate road space is not efficient, yet this is currently the only mechanism" and "congestion-targeted road pricing is the most cost-effective and flexible way to deliver the benefit

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