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**Response to Scottish Executive consultation on
Making Development Plans Deliver**

Issues of Concern to the Scotland's Residential Development Industry

1. Homes for Scotland is the representative membership body for the home building and residential development industry in Scotland. Our member companies build over 90% of all new homes in Scotland and the industry is the largest user of the planning system in Scotland.
2. Homes for Scotland welcomes the Scottish Executive's commitment to improving Scotland's planning system and is pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the consultation document "Making Development Plans Deliver".
3. For almost half a century land use planning in Scotland has been based on a presumption in favour of development. It is now perhaps a truism to say that in parts of Scotland the planning system actively seeks to restrict the release of land for development to the point where market forces cannot generate the investment necessary to renew Scotland's physical and community infrastructure. Much of this resistance stems from a political environment that encourages politicians to take short-term decisions at the expense of strategic planning.
4. In that context Homes for Scotland would urge Scottish Ministers to consider the introduction of Planning Boards which would incorporate representation from bodies charged with facilitating strategic investment, infrastructure providers and representatives from industry and commerce.
5. Before turning to the specific questions raised in the document, Homes for Scotland would wish to make some general observations relating to the operation of the planning system in Scotland as it relates to the procurement of investment in new housing.
6. The recently published Report of the Barker Review⁽¹⁾ confirmed the UK's housing supply crisis. The opening sentence to the foreword of the report states: "The long term upward trend in house prices and recent problems of affordability are the clearest manifestation of a housing shortage in the U.K....."
7. Making it clear that the supply of housing is constrained by a number of factors, the Report's most damning indictment is reserved for the planning system which is condemned for being complex with timescales that are unacceptably long and requirements that can be used to prevent development of housing.
8. Although Kate Barker's report is primarily based on English experience, it is a report based on UK data and is UK-wide in its conclusions and she confirmed at a recent seminar in Edinburgh⁽²⁾ that she saw the same factors at work in Scotland.

9. Barker succinctly summarises the constraints which impede the delivery of new housing:
 - land availability
 - the complexity of the planning system
 - lack of infrastructure
 - lack of public investment in social rented housing
10. The first two lie directly at the door of the land use planning system while the third is a testimony to the inability of the present development plan system to co-ordinate investment in the basic infrastructure required to build a modern successful Scotland.
11. Scotland is facing a housing crisis. That is not only the view of Homes for Scotland and its member companies, it is also a view emerging from the Local Housing Strategies being prepared by local authorities across Scotland and it is a view being articulated by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the Chartered Institute of Housing and many other organisations involved with housing on a day-to-day basis.
12. Kate Barker compares the UK housing market unfavourably with our continental neighbours and she assesses the consequences of the failure to deliver sufficient housing over the past thirty years – the lower quality of life for individuals and the constraints on economic growth as housing absorbs the financial resources of individuals which could have been used to expand other sectors.
13. The report highlights how the political process supports those who have houses compared with those who have not and across Scotland there is emerging a body of evidence to suggest that planning authorities often compound that felony by making two fundamentally flawed assumptions:
 - That slowing up the rate of house building by acceding to the demands of vociferous objectors does not adversely impact on house price inflation, and
 - That seeking to capture growth in land values to fund infrastructural deficits will not adversely impact on either rates of production or land release.
14. In pressurised housing market areas in Scotland there is an undersupply of housing. The gap between supply and requirement is widening.

15. In a recent report for the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland⁽³⁾ Professor Colin Jones of Heriot Watt University reaches a conclusion in common with Barker when he states that the current methods of assessing and providing for housing demand are unsound and inadequate. In paragraph 5.12 of his report he says: "Simply assessing housing demand by the use of aggregate demographic forecasts will not designate sufficient land for housing."
16. He precedes this conclusion by directly quoting Barker: "There is considerable evidence that a shortage of housing exists in the UK, but the nature of this shortage is complex. Simply comparing the number of households and the number of dwellings fails to capture mismatches between location of supply and demand or between the type of housing desired and that which is available." In his paragraph 5.13 he goes on to expand on this subject: "...the housing market is segmented and planning should recognise this. Distinguishing between local and mobile demand is not sufficient to address this issue. The people who wish to buy semi-detached or detached housing in suburbia are not the same households who wish to buy flats on former brownfield sites in inner city locations...."
17. Inadequate assessment of the demand for houses by the planning system and how the demand is to be met is the central problem of the housing market from which all other problems flow.
18. In terms of procuring the housing Scotland needs over the next 10 to 20 years, Development Plans will only deliver if they facilitate investment by the private sector and by RSLs.
19. In an attempt to better understand the way the planning system seeks to deal with supply side issues Homes for Scotland carried out a study of some recent Local Plan Inquiries.

Primacy of the Development Plan

20. The Stirling Local Plan Inquiry typified the difficulties of bringing forward local plans, when the basis of the land requirements within Structure Plans have been superseded by up to date forecasts, market experience and new considerations in light of Scottish Planning Policy 3 (SPP3), namely promoting housing choice and concealed households (i.e. Local Housing Strategies).
21. Stirling Council (SC) relied upon Section 17(3) of the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 that provides that where Ministers have, under section 10 of the Act, approved a structure plan for any area, the planning authority shall not adopt any plan or proposal which does not conform to that structure plan.

22. SC stated clearly that there was no legislative requirement under Section 17 of the Act to consider 'material considerations'.
23. Since the Structure Plan was approved, Ministers had issued updated planning policy in the shape of SPP3 and Planning Advice Note 38 (Revised).
24. In terms of the weight to be attached to SPP3, it is worth noting that the introductory statement to SPP3 is very similar to National Planning Policy Guideline 3. SC and other local authorities have noted this and consider that SPP3 is merely guidance. Indeed SPP3 confirms within the opening statement that it is only a material consideration.
25. Consequently, even when it can be demonstrated that a planning authority is faced with a need for an additional land release, precisely the circumstances envisaged in SPP3, the interpretation of legislation and planning authorities' views on the status of SPPs mean that structure plan policy will not be set aside. There exists an awkward relationship between the policy position set out in SPP3 and approved structure plans.

NPPG3 and SPP3

26. The methodology for assessing housing land requirements is no longer an arithmetic calculation, as was the case under NPPG3. The emphasis is now upon delivery and consideration requires to be given to assessing concealed households (affordable housing), and promoting mixed communities, which is being interpreted as introducing range, choice and tenure mix. This approach has been ratified by the Reporter at the Clydebank Local Plan Inquiry

Delivery of Housing

27. With regard to delivery of housing, it is acknowledged that local plans must ensure that a five-year land supply exists from date of adoption. There is also a stated aim to ensure that at all times sufficient effective land is available to meet the land requirement for at least the following five years. In this regard, the programming of the land audit over a seven-year period is useful.
28. However, it is the experience of Homes for Scotland that Reporters at Local Plan Inquiries appear to be only concerned with ensuring that the local plan complies with this position at the date of adoption.
29. It is Homes for Scotland's understanding that, when SPP3 was issued it was intended to ensure that policies are in place to maintain that land supply and that clear mechanisms require to be in place to release additional land in good time, over the course of the local plan. Reporters are not addressing themselves to this requirement.

30. SPP3 at paragraph 66 states that if development plans do not keep pace with the need to maintain a supply of land “planning permission should be granted in advance of local plan adoption provided that the proposals comply with other policies of the development plan”.
31. However, in circumstances where greenbelt boundaries “shrink wrap” settlements, and where there are low levels of brownfield land, it is clear that almost every application will be contrary to policies of the local plan.
32. The notion of safeguarded sites is one which, although not explicitly referred to within SPP3, has been used in the Finalised Edinburgh & the Lothians Structure Plan. This concept provides the opportunity to focus the granting of these planning permissions, whilst ensuring that infrastructure funding is guided in a long-term strategy.

Delivering Housing Land in Stirling

33. In the case of Stirling, when faced with a housing land shortfall within 18 months of local plan adoption the Council, and Reporter, appeared reluctant to entertain such a notion for safeguarded sites given that the concept is not explicitly referred to by SPP3. It is Homes for Scotland’s view that in order to properly plan for the area, and co-ordinate long term infrastructure investment, local plans should be expected to build-in the ability to ‘lift sites off the shelf’ at the appropriate time to meet emerging shortfalls.
34. Glasgow City Council is advancing this concept by the undertaking of greenbelt studies which identify opportunities for longer-term release, thereby properly planning for the greenbelt. The identification of a site within the study does not imply that it is acceptable at that time but, when compared to the various opportunities around the greenbelt, its release can be placed within a hierarchy of strategic infrastructure investment. Outwith such formal studies, a Reporter to Local Plans has an opportunity to recommend locations, which should be kept in reserve, to be released at the appropriate time when a shortfall materialises. If it is not stated within the local plan, the Reporter should give greater weight to the appropriateness of sites for future release, and clearer provisions on how these reserve, or safeguarded, sites should be brought forward.
35. In the case of Stirling Council, whilst admitting that there will be a shortfall within 18 months of local plan adoption (based upon rolling forward the land audit), they are committed to reviewing the structure plan in 2004, with further review of the local plan thereafter. In practice, the timetable involved will not resolve the emerging shortfall, which could result in a plethora of applications and likely appeals relatively soon after a local plan adoption.

Delivering Housing Land in Edinburgh & the Lothians

36. Reverting to the Edinburgh & the Lothians Structure Plan, and with reference to the issue of delivering housing land, this structure plan area, regarded by many as the driver of Scotland's economy, has since the late 1990s led the way in terms of house price inflation and housing demand. With parts of Edinburgh comparable to the London area in terms of house prices, deliverability of housing land through the development plan process has been characterised by delay and lack of infrastructure co-ordination (e.g. South-East Wedge).
37. The debate on **allocations vs. completions** continues to be raised, with clarification given by Ministers in the ultimate approval although the land requirement relates to allocations, the structure plan has set a completion target.
38. It is fair to say that, for whatever reason, a lack of trust has developed between the Lothian planning authorities and house builders. This is due in part to the lack of any evident commitment on behalf of the planning authorities to ensure that housing land is delivered in time to meet structure plan requirements.
39. The Lothian Authorities have been particularly slow at advancing local plans, with the Midlothian Local Plan missing an entire structure plan period. The City of Edinburgh continues to determine applications on the basis of out of date local plans, and relying upon supplementary planning guidance and council policy which have not been tested through the local plan process.
40. The preparation of the City Wide Plan is awaited. If the current timetable is met, it is unlikely that an adopted City Plan will be in place until early 2007. (i.e. Finalised early 2005, with LPI late 2005/ early 2006. Allowing for 3/4 month LPI, and Reporter's Report in late 2006, adoption is unlikely to be achieved until early 2007). This will be almost half way through the proposed Structure Plan period, and indeed after the start of the review of the Structure Plan (2006).
41. The finalised modifications statement that allocations are minimum requirements is welcomed, as this will provide the flexibility to ensure that local plans allocate sites above the requirements in order to respond to delays in the delivery of sites. However, it is confusing to limit minimum allocations to only some of the structure plan core areas.
42. The deliverability of housing land is not being assessed in a robust manner. Given that the structure plan does not differentiate between tenures, greater consideration must be given to auditing all housing sites, and the levels of Communities Scotland funding that can be assumed.

43. Homes for Scotland made detailed representations to the Scottish Executive concerning the deliverability of the housing land supply, based upon past performance. Criticisms of the land supply calculations were based upon performance of the base land supply, validity of including constrained sites, and deliverability of post base land supply allocated sites (emerging local plans) and new allocations, and the expected windfall allowance.
44. Homes for Scotland felt these were important issues requiring close examination. However, the decision not to hold an Examination in Public in order that these may be expanded upon was disappointing. Homes for Scotland considers it better to test the validity of the Structure Plan assumptions and projections early on as opposed to deferring a review to two years post approval. This does not give confidence to the industry in terms of long-term investment if a structure plan is essentially going to last two years. The proposal that EIPs be mandatory for the next generation of strategic plans is welcomed.

Delivering Housing Land through Land Audits

45. Placing greater emphasis upon the annual housing land supply audit process is important but there is little point in agreeing an effective land supply, unless it is measured against the housing land requirements.
46. Homes for Scotland supports the seven-year programming of land audits. The maintaining of a five-year effective land supply at all times can only be achieved if we look sufficiently far ahead in order to react to shortfalls.
47. Under current advice, PAN38, the five-year land supply is measured from the base date. In practice, it normally takes one year from the audit date to finalise the Land Audit. At this point, if a shortfall is acknowledged, the identification of sites in a co-ordinated manner, such as North Lanarkshire's Interim Housing Paper, can take anything up to one year in order to prioritise the release of additional land. Allowing for planning applications, and lead-in time prior to first completion, it is reasonable to expect that a period of three years will have passed since the base audit date for the shortfall to be addressed.
48. In theory, the seven-year audit period allows for consideration of the latter period years 3-7. If a shortfall is apparent, then there is sufficient time within years 1 and 2 to remedy the situation by way of either bringing sites forward, or releasing additional land. To date, as far as Homes for Scotland is aware, the audit process has not been used in this proactive way across any planning authority in Scotland. (ie a rolling five-year land supply)

Housing Land Audits and Comparison to Land Requirements

49. If the audit process is to contribute to the understanding of the housing land position across Scotland, and thereby allow planning authorities to properly plan for their area, a methodology for assessing land requirements is urgently required.
50. In theory the application of structure plan requirements will provide the number of completions required from which the five-year target figure can be derived.
51. However as the Stirling Local Plan Inquiry demonstrated, when structure plan requirements are so far out of date, Councils can interpret structure plan requirements as diminishing as completions are taking place over time.
52. It is Homes for Scotland's view that when structure plan allocations are being consumed at a rate faster than expected and when Local Housing Strategies, windfall trends, and changes to household composition and formation are factored into the equation, the development plan system requires a more responsive monitoring mechanism to assist delivery.
53. That system cannot simply be an arithmetic calculation. It must profile the land supply against the requirements to provide for range and choice. There is no point in having 80% of the land supply taken up by flats, if housing for families is required.
54. With specific regard to the finalised modifications to the FE&LSP, policy HOU10 requires that action shall only be taken to supplement the land supply when this falls below 90%. This modification is inconsistent with SPP3, and all other structure plan approvals. At no other time has such a threshold level been suggested.
55. Homes for Scotland would argue that if a threshold level has to be imposed, then in order to meet obligations of maintaining the five-year land supply, a level of 110% would be appropriate to act as a trigger whereby action should be taken to ensure that the five-year supply is met at all times.
56. Guidance in the form of SPP1 and SPP3, in particular, repeatedly states that consultation with stakeholders (Homes for Scotland in particular) should be undertaken. Experience of this in action, for instance in respect of the urban capacity study undertaken for Edinburgh, leads to the conclusion that Local Authorities are giving lip service to this provision.

57. There are further examples, in Edinburgh and elsewhere, where consultation has been progressed by excluding Homes for Scotland – until direct contact is made requesting that involvement. In the case of Local Housing Strategies, and the assessment therein of private sector supply, Homes for Scotland has only been consulted by a handful of local authorities.

Housing Demand Factors

58. Homes for Scotland has become increasingly concerned about the way housing demand factors are dealt with by planning authorities. The Stirling LPI has highlighted the anomalies of out of date structure plan requirements (in Stirling's case only 18 months after approval), when compared to what is happening on the ground.
59. Indicators point toward a greater requirement for housing in the Stirling area than was originally anticipated. Household projections since 1996 have increased, whilst the 2001 Census also shows an increase. Build rates (used as a measure of demand since all houses constructed by member companies are sold with no member companies "holding stock" as in some areas south of the Border) in the past few years show a huge level of demand. In addition, the industry is also presented with information on the level of concealed households via the Local Housing Strategy.
60. In the Stirling area it is estimated that the shortfall amounts to somewhere in the order of 500 houses since the structure plan was prepared, a period of two - three years. Stirling Council does not dispute this figure but does not appear willing to take action on it.
61. As was indicated at the beginning of this note, when a Structure Plan is not up to date, even one that is relatively "young", there is little opportunity to address these matters at the Local Plan Inquiry if, as is the case, the Planning Authority acts on a strict interpretation of Section 17 of the Act.

Housing Choice

62. Efforts are being made by the Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Structure Plan team to develop a methodology for assessing housing demand, in particular by assessing housing choice, over and above the household projections. SPP3 (paragraph 23) and the issue of housing 'choice', is being regarded by local authorities and developers as meaning more than merely providing for a range of house sizes.

63. Choice should also be considered from the perspective of the house purchaser, as it is their lifestyle choice that is being influenced. The aim for mixed communities to include affordable housing is well documented and used by Edinburgh among others to justify spreading affordable housing across a planning authority's area.
64. However, no consideration is being given to the need to meet and foster increased levels of owner occupation, particularly with regard to the upper levels of the market, which must be a crucial component of the "Smart, Successful Scotland" strategy. This is perhaps best typified within the Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan 2003. The section relating to 'housing choice' (paragraphs 5.37 to 5.42) focuses entirely upon affordable and special needs housing, without reference to meeting "choice" from the owner occupied sector in an area where economic development agencies are promoting strategies to build the area as a destination for high quality knowledge based industries.
65. The modifications made by Ministers to the GCVSP included numerous measures relating to a requirement to provide a choice in terms of size and type of housing in each housing market area.
66. Whilst this has been interpreted by many of the planning authorities as permitting the release of greenfield land, e.g. Cambuslang & Rutherglen LP and Glasgow City LP, over and above the relatively large banks of brownfield land, other planning authorities with similar land supply profiles are resisting greenfield release. There are inconsistencies in the application of policies "promoting choice" with West Dunbartonshire (Clydebank LP) and Renfrewshire reluctant to release any greenfield land, claiming that brownfield land alone can provide market choice.
67. Clearer guidance, and an agreed methodology for the calculation of housing demand, including meeting choice is urgently required.
68. It is Homes for Scotland's view, in the light of recent experience, that local authority planners in attempting to define quality housing, are either failing to understand or choosing to ignore the operation of the housing market.
69. This can, perhaps, be illustrated by reference to an example drawn from Renfrewshire, where Council planners attempted to categorise the land supply based upon house sizes. They took the view that upper-market housing essentially related to houses of a size around 130 sq m (c.1400sqft), with a sales value of over £150k. Such houses are being built in Paisley on main thoroughfares adjacent to fast food outlets – a location considered by house builders as a mid-market site.

70. A failure to properly embrace or even understand industry definitions of market segments means that there is emerging a chronic undersupply of sites for upper market housing thereby reducing choice and reinforcing price escalation in the second hand stock.
71. Whilst it is welcome that the GCVSP review is to consider market demand, the contrary position is currently advanced within the FE&LSP. Paragraph 3.7 of the FE&LSP highlights this matter when it is stated that since the projected level of need exceeds any previous rate of new building, planning for additional housing above need is not considered appropriate.
72. This appears to contradict Ministers' policy, as published in SPP3, concerning choice, and deliverability of housing land.
73. The failure to reach the expected completions is not simply due to slow procurement in the housing building industry. As the Barker Review makes plain, it is largely due to the slow delivery of land via the planning process. Homes for Scotland has evidence which shows that even when sites are allocated in the development plan or indeed have planning consent, it can take months and in some cases years to purify conditions or reach S75 agreements.
74. Of note in this regard is a policy restriction on the identified sites within the Finalised Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan 2003: "Housing on these greenfield sites shall not be occupied before the West Edinburgh Tram to Newbridge is operational or its funding has been committed". This policy statement indicates that these sites should be regarded as non-effective sites at date of adoption of the local plan. That is not the view of the planning authority when housing land audits are undertaken.
75. It is interesting to note that Barker sees the need to expand production as an opportunity. She says plan to meet the demand. If there is a skills shortage, plan to meet the skills shortage. By doing so, there is growth in both the economy and in employment and the prospect of controlling prices.
76. The growth in the economy is not confined to the building industry. Money which is not going into the increased cost of housing can be directed into either savings or consumption which in turn expands other areas of the economy.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

77. The use of supplementary planning guidance (SPG), and so-called 'approved council policy', is an increasing facet of the planning system in Scotland.
78. In some instances, SPG is being used to justify local plan policy and this is particularly the case in respect of delivery mechanisms for affordable housing.

79. In these circumstances, Reporters at Local Plan Inquiries are demonstrating an unwillingness to test the validity and accuracy of the underlying policy justification - as the purpose of the Inquiry is to address objections to the Local Plan. This issue was particularly apparent at the Stirling LP, which means that the opportunity to test the policy was missed.
80. Homes for Scotland is increasingly concerned at the use of SPG. SPG is rarely tested at Public Inquiry and there is evidence that, contrary to SPP1, it is being used as an easy alternative to updating local plans.
81. Homes for Scotland recognises that there are circumstances where SPG is required and, indeed, may be essential to the proper operation of the planning system. It does, however, take the view that better independent testing of SPG is required. At the very least it should be a requirement that the scope of LPs be widened to include all relevant supplementary guidance to ensure that the policy justification is sound. It should not be acceptable for a local plan inquiry to conclude that a policy position is acceptable subject to SPG.

Turning to the specific questions raised in the consultation document, Homes for Scotland would respond as follows:

Q1. What are the most important factors in the successful management of development planning?

- A1. Homes for Scotland would support the Scottish Executive's view that (a) local authorities, with a clear understanding of the purpose of development planning and a strong emphasis on achieving outcomes, have a good record on development planning; (b) where strong political will is evident, management can drive forward the development plan process and (c) empowerment and motivation of local authority staff and stakeholders, from preparation to adoption and implementation, should ensure delivery of effective plans.

However, it is the view of Homes for Scotland that development plans will never deliver investment unless they are up to date, grounded in a firm understanding of development economics and address issues of procurement.

To keep plans up-to-date relevant planning authorities must be properly resourced to recruit skilled professional staff and to that end we would support the point made by the Director of CBI Scotland to the Deputy First Minister and Finance Minister at a meeting on 31st March 2004 that the Scottish Executive should support an appropriate increase in resources, through the SR 2004 process, to improve Scotland's planning system.

Q2. Should development plan schemes indicate timetables for plan preparation to provide some certainty for stakeholders?

A2. If development plans are to be meaningful documents in terms of stimulating and directing investment they must provide the private sector with certainty.

Adherence to strict timetables should be mandatory. Publication of a development plan scheme by each local authority within three months of new legislation coming into force is a proposal welcomed by Homes for Scotland but the home building industry would look to the Executive to ensure that Councils are required to meet timescales for producing development plans.

Q3. What are the most effective ways to ensure quick preparation and review of development plans?

A3. The consultation document sets out seven measures, which could be used to require development plans to be reviewed more regularly. When the home building industry “signed-up” for a plan led system it did so on the assumption that plans would be kept up to date. Up-to-date plans are essential if we are to create a climate to encourage investment and this is particularly the case when plans expect planning gain to generate the investment necessary to address infrastructure deficits. Plans will only be kept up-to-date if a failure to do so results in punitive sanctions. To that end, Homes for Scotland would propose that where a development plan is out of date the plan should no longer have “primacy”. In addition, consent should be “deemed granted” after six weeks since there is no development plan to provide justified reasons for refusal.

Q4. Do you agree that early-targeted consultation on the key issues should replace consultation on draft policies and proposals?

A4. Early targeted consultation will improve confidence in the planning system but clearer guidance will be needed on the way planning authorities engage with the private sector. Planners must recognise that market forces are dynamic and that proposals must be based on an understanding of the impact of market forces and economic change on land use policies.

Q5. Should these and any other bodies have a duty to engage in development planning placed upon them?

A5. The organisations listed in paragraph 28 of the consultation should be required to engage in the development planning process at the earliest stages.

Development plans are diminished where they contain proposals that will attract fundamental objections from other statutory bodies at the implementation stage.

Q6. Do you have any suggestions for improving the involvement of businesses in the development planning process?

A6. Homes for Scotland shares the disappointment of CBI Scotland that the involvement of business in the development planning process has neither been sustained nor consistent. The private sector is best placed to identify investment opportunities and there is an urgent need for development plans to recognise that investment is not just about location. It is very often about timing. To that end Homes for Scotland remains committed to facilitating engagement between the home building industry and planning authorities. In addition, we endorse CBI Scotland's view that Local Economic Forums have a crucial role to play in engaging in development planning.

Q7. Do you agree that the certified copy of the plan should remain a paper version?

A7. The certified copy of the development plan should remain a paper version.

Q8. Do you agree that a Development Planning Forum should be formed to support better plan making?

A8. Paragraph 32 of the consultation document states "... the plan should be fit for purpose. It must begin by creating a sense of place - identifying the defining characteristics of the area and the drivers of change."

A failure to deal with the "drivers for change" goes to the heart of the deficiencies of the current planning system. While recognising that the planning system must balance economic, social and environmental considerations, any new development planning system will not be fit for purpose unless it identifies not only the drivers of change but the mechanisms necessary to release the investment which will bring about the improvements sought by the development plan. That will demand a major shift of emphasis requiring not only new techniques but also a cultural shift in terms of the planning system's view of development. If a Development Planning Forum was tasked to deal with these issues, Homes for Scotland would both support the proposal and give an undertaking to actively participate in the work of the Forum.

Q9. Do you agree that action planning is a continual process with formal publication of an action plan every two years?

A9. Homes for Scotland supports formal publication of action plans every two years and we would urge the Scottish Executive to give clear guidance on the content of action plans. They must be more than “wish lists” and they must address the identification and removal of barriers to procurement of the investment which is necessary to support development plan policies.

Q10. Outside the city regions, do you support the provision for an area-wide local development plan to set the overall context in areas where there continues to be a mosaic of local development plans?

A10. The provision of an area-wide local development plan to set the overall context in areas where there continues to be a mosaic of local development plans will be an essential component of the development plan system particularly to set a framework for identifying priorities for infrastructural investment. The Barker Report⁽¹⁾ stresses that housing land and infrastructure should be planned together. Figures for housing land are meaningless without infrastructure. Whether it is investment in water and drainage, transport systems or education, investment in our infrastructure requires a strategic approach. A critical element in the production of these documents will be speed of production. They must not be inhibitors of progress in relation to the production of local plans. On a point of detail, Homes for Scotland would be concerned if, in the drive to establish fewer plans covering larger areas, planning authorities were tempted to abandon established housing market areas (HMAs) in favour of a single housing requirement for a large area. The Regional Councils did a lot of work in the 1970/80s to establish HMAs and these were endorsed by research undertaken by Scottish Homes in the 1990s. They must be retained and refined if the planning system is to respond effectively to market signals as envisaged by Kate Barker.

Q11. Do you agree that, where it can be demonstrated that there has been community and other stakeholder consultation, supplementary guidance should have a statutory backing?

A11. See earlier comments – paragraphs 77 to 81.

Q12. Do you support greater consistency in the style of plans, particularly proposal maps?

A12. Yes. It is important that development plans conform to a consistent style across Scotland in order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation.

Q13. Under what circumstances should local authorities be allowed to depart from the Reporter's recommendations on the local development plan examination?

A13. Homes for Scotland believes that Reporters' findings should be binding. Where a Planning Authority takes the view that a Reporter's finding can not be supported by the evidence presented and tested at Inquiry, it should be open to the authority to seek to have the issue resolved by Scottish Ministers.

A process which allows a planning authority to disregard the Reporter's findings reduces confidence in the system and raises questions about the worth of participation if the time, effort and resources expended are not seen to be assisting the process of driving out better development plans.

Q14. Do you agree with the proposed content for city region plans?

A14. Yes.

Q15a. Should there be equal representation of local authorities on the joint committees?

A15a. Homes for Scotland would not wish to express a view on this matter.

Q15b. How should costs be divided among local authorities on the joint committees?

A15b. Homes for Scotland would not wish to express a view on this matter

Q16. Do you consider that the proposed approval process will be quick and transparent?

A16. The approval process as proposed should be quick and transparent although it is noted that the consultation document makes no reference to timescales for the preparation of Reporter's findings (see paragraph 75). The timescales will only be achieved if planning authorities are appropriately resourced.

Q17. Are the proposed transitional arrangements appropriate?

A17. Homes for Scotland would support the proposed arrangements.

References:

- (1) The Barker Review of Housing Supply, 17 March 2004, HM Treasury
- (2) CBI Scotland meeting, 30 March 2004, Edinburgh
- (3) House Prices, Housing Market Trends and Housing Supply Issues in Scotland, Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland report by Professor Colin Jones, Heriot Watt University, February 2004