

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CIL EXAMINATION OPENING STATEMENT

My name is Jake Berriman and together with my colleagues we shall, over the next two days, be presenting for examination Shropshire's Community Infrastructure Levy.

I would like to welcome you all to Shrewsbury today, either as a participant or as an observer, as we discuss Shropshire's pioneering approach to CIL which links developer contributions directly to community priorities.

It seems no time at all since I was last in this room presenting Shropshire's Core Strategy which was subsequently found sound. A Plan which I described then as providing the basis for delivering agreed community aspirations and managing sustainable development for the foreseeable future. A Plan which I described as essential for us in establishing a more consistent, clear and effective policy base for investors, residents and decision makers. Our challenge, in achieving this, I said, would involve us drawing on the strengths of our people and communities to help them to realise their potential to become more resilient and adaptive to change, a process involving everyone across Shropshire taking individual and collective responsibility for their future. Our approach is one of measured pragmatism and has centred on working with and sustaining communities of place and recognising that this is a dynamic and not a fixed equation and that flexibility of mind and deed will be required over time to make this happen and to change the status quo.

I have introduced this examination to CIL in this way as we believe CIL should be a simple, transparent, fair and equitable tool for capturing investment opportunities which we hope will help communities to adopt a more receptive, indeed a more positive approach to development over time, but of course the completion of this cost/benefit equation depends upon our first getting a Charging Schedule approved.

I can confirm that, as set out in the Council's Declaration, all legal and procedural requirements have been met and that having regard to the Regulations, Guidance and Common sense during a period of rapid change we have produced a Charging Schedule that feels right in the Shropshire context. Our levy rates have been extensively informed by our evidence base, including what respondents have told us, and is consistent with it. Nevertheless we have used our own judgement in concluding what those rates should be, having carefully considered the likely impact of the CIL on our adopted development strategy.

The levy rates before you are part of an integrated approach to delivering the Core Strategy, of which section 106 agreements, affordable housing contributions and design requirements are also an integral part. Although this examination is focused on just the levy rates, the Shropshire approach sees them as part of an integrated package. This approach is set out in more detail in our recently adopted Developer Contributions SPD and LDF Implementation Plan, available on line and at the back of the room today.

Sustainable Places lie at the heart of Shropshire's Core Strategy. Time and again people have told us that they do not want to see more development unless it comes with a package of infrastructure designed to support that community of place. This is

often easier said than done and it means different things in different communities at different times. Over the past year we have developed our thinking to provide a practical and pragmatic interpretation of what this approach means in practice and introduced 18 Place Plans centred on delivery. We will be using these to drive an annual conversation between Shropshire Councillors and local communities on which infrastructure they agree should be prioritised in their area over the next 12 months. The CIL is an integral part of this integrated approach, but only part; it must be read alongside other planning requirements and obligations and should not be viewed in isolation.

Shropshire is a distinct and yet very varied area. To reflect that variety we could have identified 30 charging zones. However, even this would not have accounted for the fact that development viability can vary dramatically either side of a railway track and it would have failed our simplicity test. We have intentionally taken a broad brush approach to the CIL, and are heartened that the regulations not only allow this but that the statutory guidance encourages us to do.

Our simple differential levy rates are viable for the majority of development and have been arrived at having considered their impact on development as a whole across our area, and not just its specific impact upon a small number of sites. The place for tailoring developer contributions to the unique circumstances of a development is for section 106 agreements, rather than the CIL.

Our levy rates have been informed by, and are consistent with, the evidence we have on economic viability across Shropshire. We have aimed to strike what appears to us to be an appropriate balance in the current economic climate, that will not put our development strategy at risk. The levy rates reflect a cautious approach, applying a significant margin for error to ensure they are robust.

A minority of our residential development occurs in our rural areas, and we have taken the view that a higher levy rate, less than half of what has been shown to be viable, will not put our development strategy at serious risk. We have, however, reflected the results of consultation by significantly reducing the rural levy rate to a point where I believe experience will come to show that it sensitively balances individual and community aspirations. We will of course keep its effect under review.

The last 12 months or so have been interesting times to be engaged in Town Planning and to me they have provided the room to be different, the licence to champion common sense and they will, I think, be remembered for the emergence of pragmatism over perfectionism. As such, and amongst other pioneers, I feel able to reveal the error in our charging schedule. The formula in the middle of page 2 of our charging schedule should have 3 Cs and only 1 E in it. The calculation should of course be expressed as a proportion of the chargeable development, in other words over C, rather than as a proportion of the existing buildings (E) as currently shown. I would ask the examiner to correct this typographical error in her report.

With this one minor exception, we consider that we are fully compliant in every other respect with the regulations and guidance. We respectfully request that our Charging Schedule be subject to close examination, in the confident expectation that it will pass all the tests before it.