

## **Christchurch and East Dorset Councils Community Infrastructure Levy Examination Opening Statement 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

On behalf of Christchurch and East Dorset Councils I would like to welcome you all to this independent examination of the Christchurch and East Dorset Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedules.

Christchurch and East Dorset Councils are proposing to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy to help facilitate delivery of the Local Plan. The Councils' Core Strategy and accompanying infrastructure delivery plan is up to date and was subject to public examination in September 2013. The Core Strategy sets out the requirement to deliver approximately 8,500 new homes including almost 3,000 affordable homes, 80ha of new employment development and significant levels of new convenience and comparison floorspace by 2028.

The Christchurch and East Dorset CIL Charging Schedules were first subject to Examination in 2015. The Examiner's Report issued on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2015 found the Charging Schedules and viability evidence to be sound and recommended adoption with no further amendments. In his report the Examiner assessed the viability evidence and stated the following;

**Paragraph 9:** *"The viability assessments were based upon relevant current land values, including Land Registry data and some actual transactions, bearing in mind that there are variations in average land values across Christchurch and East Dorset. In general, the benchmark land values used are sufficiently realistic for comparison purposes in a generic study of this type. In addition to this, the charging schedule has been informed by discussions with stakeholders and consideration of the representations made on the series of modifications proposed by the Councils."*

**Paragraph 11:** *"Christchurch and East Dorset have proposed CIL charges that provide a reasonable viability margin or buffer commensurate with the type of development being brought forward. On this basis, the evidence which has been used to inform the Charging Schedule is robust, proportionate and appropriate."*

**Paragraph 22:** *"...in this case the CIL Viability Assessment of January 2015 (CD07) shows that developments of 10 units and less would be viable and that a proposed rate of £150psm would maintain a significant viability buffer of between 73% and 77%.....The rate is therefore justified by viability evidence in accordance with the Guidance."*

**Paragraph 24:** *"...the CIL Viability Assessment of January 2015 (CD07) shows that the CIL burden would not be disproportionate and in most cases would not prevent development coming forward on small sites including brownfield sites. I am therefore satisfied the proposed rate of £150psm for Residential (10 units or less or less than 1,000sqm) is justified on viability grounds."*

The current revised Charging Schedules have been prepared to provide clarity in response to changes in the Planning Practice Guidance that were made shortly after the Examiner's report was issued. The Councils consider that the revised Charging Schedules have been prepared in accordance with the CIL Regulations and Guidance and are supported by robust viability evidence.

Implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy in Christchurch and East Dorset will assist the delivery of key infrastructure required to enable development to come forward. This is an integral part of the Government's strategy for delivering sufficient housing and commercial development to meet local needs and promote economic growth. In this regard the Community Infrastructure Levy will perform an important role alongside other sources of funding in delivering the Local Plan and growth. Inclusion of the proposed £150 residential rate will enable the Councils to swiftly respond to imminently anticipated changes in national planning guidance. In accordance with the CIL Regulations this will better enable the councils to deliver key infrastructure required to support the Local Plan.

The CIL Charging Schedules have been prepared in order to achieve a net positive economic impact on development across the plan area of Christchurch and East Dorset. The Councils consider that an appropriate balance has been struck between the need to seek additional investment to support development whilst not threatening viability and the delivery of the Local Plan.

From the production of the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule the councils have undertaken early engagement with developers, the property industry and the wider community. These representations have informed preparation of the Revised Charging Schedules through the Preliminary and Draft Charging Schedule stages.

The Charging Schedules have been informed by up to date and comprehensive viability evidence prepared by Peter Brett Associates on behalf of the councils. Since the publication of the Inspector's Report on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015 the councils' viability evidence remains robust with no requirement for further work to be undertaken, as confirmed by the Councils' advisors. This evidence reflects the current economic situation and has comprehensively assessed the impact of Local Plan policies and S106 requirements in establishing the proposed CIL rates. The viability evidence also includes site-specific assessments undertaken for the Core Strategy strategic housing allocations.

Through preparation of the Core Strategy the Councils have undertaken extensive infrastructure planning, which has identified the range of infrastructure required to support the Local Plan. This evidence base is up to date and has been subject to public examination. Through this process an aggregate funding gap has been identified which provides the justification for introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Community Infrastructure

Levy will be deployed alongside other sources of funding in order to deliver the necessary infrastructure to implement the Local Plan. The Councils are working closely with delivery partners to secure additional sources of funding where required.

Through the preparation of the Core Strategy the councils have addressed the need to avoid harm to sites designated for their nature conservation importance under European legislation in the District and Borough. The adopted policy approach to heathland mitigation set out in the Core Strategy has been subject to examination and is supported by Natural England. The councils have made a commitment to prioritise sufficient CIL funding to deliver the necessary heathland mitigation measures to mitigate the impact of all development, which has a potential impact. The operation of the Community Infrastructure Levy to enable the pooling of funds toward appropriate mitigation projects is therefore critical to ensuring sustainable development in the area.

The charging schedules have been prepared in accordance with the 2008 Planning Act, the 2010 CIL Regulations (as amended) and CIL Guidance as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance. On behalf of Christchurch and East Dorset Councils I commend the Draft Charging Schedules for adoption.

George Whalley  
Principal Planning Officer  
Christchurch and East Dorset Councils