



Birmingham Friends of the Earth
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Hayley Anderson
Birmingham City Council
CIL Draft Charging Schedule
PO Box 28
Birmingham
B1 1TU

10th November 2014

Dear Hayley

Re: Community Infrastructure Levy Consultation

Please find below Birmingham Friends of the Earth's response to the consultation on the council's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy:

Principle of CIL:

We generally support the principal of the CIL and believe that as many planning gain payments from development should be channeled through CIL in preference to S106. The CIL is a much more transparent process, with both communities and the local authority able to be fully aware of the benefits and mitigations they are to receive as a result of new development. In addition, developers will be able to clearly see the contributions they will be expected to make, giving greater certainty to their development plans and budgets, which will in turn affect the price they pay for the land they wish to develop.

We feel that S106 arrangements have in the past been very obscure due to the nature of them being negotiated between the local authority and developers largely behind closed doors. This has left communities uninformed as to what benefits they will receive from development, and a general feeling of mistrust from all parties regarding their signing. This mistrust, obscurity and uncertainty gives further favour towards transferring as much as possible of planning gain from S106 to CIL.

123 List:

We would like to see specific inclusion of city wide walking and cycling infrastructure within the 123 list. Birmingham has very poor walking and cycling infrastructure, although the Birmingham Cycle Ambition Grant has help inject £30m into improvements over three years. However, this level of funding needs to be maintained to extend and enhance provision, and a significant contribution from CIL should be put towards the comparatively modest figure of £10 per person per year being spent on walking and cycling infrastructure and support. More detailed information on this can be found in our report: 'How Birmingham City Council could fund annual investment in Active Travel of £10 per person', which is included with this response.

Sustainable Urban Extension:

We would question why the Sustainable Urban Extension has been left out of the CIL, especially given the fact that this housing would be located in the 'high value' area and would be significantly cheaper for housing developers to build due to the land being greenbelt land with none of the issues and costs associated with brownfield development.



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Whilst there will obviously be significant S106 contributions gained from this development, we feel that such a significant number of new homes will undoubtedly have an impact on the rest of the city's infrastructure, and therefore a CIL contribution should be sought to address these impacts, even if this is a lower figure than asked for outside of the Sustainable Urban Extension areas.

Viability:

Whilst we recognise that flexibility may be required with CIL payments to take account of costs outside of developers' control (such as high development costs associated with redeveloping Listed Buildings), this should not extend to developers who have clearly paid too much for the land or buildings, or have expectations of unreasonably large profits (i.e in excess of 12-15%). The open and transparent nature of CIL should mean that developers are fully aware of the costs that they will incur, and they can therefore take these into account when they are preparing their development costings. Increased development costs resulting from CIL should affect land values as a first step, so that land values are reduced in response to these extra development costs. We feel that the protection of high land values and unreasonably large profits should not take preference over CIL, S106, energy efficiency targets, and other social and environmental obligations.

We hope you find these comments useful and look forward to a strong and well implemented CIL to contribute to the much needed community infrastructure that Birmingham requires.

Yours sincerely

Ben Mabbett
Planning Campaigner

On behalf of Birmingham Friends of the Earth