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**Sent:** Monday, September 19, 2016 5:56 PM

**To:** Planning Policy

**Cc:** Stuart, David; Rachel Lewis

**Subject:** Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for providing Historic England with an opportunity to comment on the emerging CIL, an important source of funding for the infrastructure required to underpin the delivery sustainable development and regeneration in the District.

### **Appendix B: Draft Regulation 123 List**

In 2013 North Somerset District Council proposed a CIL Charging Schedule that included an *Environment and Heritage* section providing the opportunity for funding to support "*Existing or improved heritage schemes of strategic significance*". This welcome feature was consistent with the scope of the CIL Regulations and was deemed an important means to support the delivery of the Local Plan's strategy for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF paragraphs 126 and 157).

In addition to supporting the delivery of the statutory development plan, the emerging Weston Super Mare Regeneration SPD makes play of the role of the historic environment in the town's renaissance and CIL is an important potential source of funding in support of the Council's ambitious agenda. Complimentary to the Local Plan and SPD the Council have submitted a bid to Historic England for Weston's designation as the south west's first *Heritage Action Zone* and I believe CIL is referred to as a future source of funding in support of this welcome high profile initiative. You may wish to discuss this matter with your NSDC lead Rachel Lewis.

Mindful of the above we would encourage the Council to reconsider the draft CIL and reinstate its previous reference to the historic environment, enabling a future potential source of funding for heritage related initiatives as expressed in the Local Plan, emerging SPD and Heritage Action Zone bid document.

### **Discretionary Relief for Exceptional Circumstances**

The CIL Regulations emphasise the need to strike an appropriate balance between the opportunities of funding infrastructure from the levy and the potential effects that may arise through increased pressure on the economic viability of development. For example, there could be circumstances where the viability of a scheme designed to secure the reuse and long term viability of a heritage asset is compromised by the requirement for CIL payments.

Vacant or underused heritage assets not only fail to make a full contribution to the District's economy but they also give rise to negative perceptions about an area. This, in turn, can detract from its attractiveness to visitors and inward investment. Consequently, in setting thresholds there needs to be a clear understanding of the potential impact which CIL could have on investment in, and regeneration of, historic areas - particularly those which have been identified as being 'at risk'.

We are therefore encouraging local authorities to assert their right to apply discretionary relief for exceptional circumstances; where development which affects heritage assets and their settings and/or their significance, may become unviable if it was subject to CIL.

Paragraph 126 of the NPPF requires that local authorities set out in their Local Plan, a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In relation to CIL, this means ensuring that the conservation of its heritage assets is taken into account when considering the level of the CIL to be imposed so as to safeguard and encourage appropriate and viable uses for the historic environment.

The *CIL Relief Information Document* recommends that the conditions and procedures for CIL relief are set out in a separate statement, defining exceptional circumstances and setting a clear rationale for their use and justification in terms of the public benefit. In this case an example could be where CIL relief would enable the restoration of heritage assets that are in a poor condition and/or 'at Risk'.

If there any issues you wish to clarify or discuss please don't hesitate in contacting me.

I look forward to the next iteration of this important planning document in due course.

Yours faithfully,

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