



# Stottesdon and Sidbury Parish Council

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Strategy and Policy  
Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 6ND

Dear Sirs

## **Shropshire Council's Proposed Use of the Community Infrastructure Levy – A Tax to speed the decline of rural communities?**

Stottesdon and Sidbury Parish Council urge Shropshire Council to reconsider these proposals and draft a policy that treats rural development on a level equal with urban development.

Shropshire Council's proposal on how to use the optional Community Infrastructure Levy is at best a clumsy attempt to generate maximum short term income to fill budget-holes, and at worst is a direct assault on the future long term sustainability of Shropshire's rural parishes. Stottesdon and Sidbury Parish Council is extremely concerned that if these proposals go through future new development outside of the defined lower rate urban centres will grind to a halt. At £80 per square metre, double the rate inside the towns, new residential development in our hamlets and villages will be affordable only to the super-rich, or to those that qualify for nil-rated affordable housing. If social engineering is the intent of Shropshire Council, this is a mighty tool – but not one that we approve of!

This dual rate is justified by citing the extra costs per capita of rural housing; an argument that the rural population is less (50% less!) deserving of new homes than those in towns? This is a crude argument that chooses to ignore the benefits that our rural communities bring to all the people of Shropshire, and suggests that our councillors would be happier running a metropolitan borough, than a beautiful, varied county where rural tourism, agricultural production, and countryside management are very proudly part of our living heritage.

We understand that Shropshire Council would like to use the Community Infrastructure Levy to replace the cumbersome s106 mechanism of reaping financial benefits from development, and we accept that in the current economic state of our Council it is prudent to seek to gain financial advantage where there is 'money to spare' in some residential development. However, it is our firm belief that the current proposal is wrong. By indiscriminately taxing a rural landowner who seeks to build perhaps 1 new home on the edge of a village twice as much per square metre as a national house-builder proposing to build perhaps 25 new homes on the edge of a town, then the results will be inevitable: modest, normal family homes will not be built outside of our towns; rural de-population will continue as people have no choice

other than to move to the towns; and our living breathing countryside will become the home only of those to whom money is no object.

Mrs F Morris  
Clerk to the Council