



Michael Rhimes

Call: 2019 [Public Access](#)

Practice areas:

Planning, Environment, Licensing, Compulsory Purchase and Compensation, Major Infrastructure Projects, Rating, Council Tax and CIL, Highways, Commons and Open Spaces, Public Law/Judicial Review



Practice Profile

Michael Rhimes is a leading junior barrister specialising in planning, environmental and public law. He is regularly instructed in complex and high-profile matters, including major planning inquiries, statutory challenges and judicial review.

Michael has acted in some of the most significant planning and infrastructure cases in recent years, including representing a local planning authority in the largest residential-led planning inquiry ever considered by the Planning Inspectorate (Highsted Call-In, March to October 2025). His work has been recognised by Planning Magazine, which named him as one of the top planning barristers under the age of 35.

He is known for a calm, strategic approach and for working closely with clients to navigate unfamiliar or high-pressure proceedings. Those instructing him value his clarity of advice, attention to detail and ability to assemble and lead effective teams through demanding litigation.

Michael accepts instructions across Chambers' core areas of practice

Planning

Michael has a wide experience of planning issues, including:

- Judicial review & statutory challenges;
- Lawful development certificates;
- The interpretation of planning policy;
- Listed buildings & conservation areas;
- Interpretation & enforceability of planning conditions;

Michael has substantial experience of planning at all levels.

Inquiries and appeals

Michael has a broad and sophisticated planning practice, acting for local planning authorities, developers and third parties across the full range of planning disputes.

His experience includes judicial review and statutory challenges, lawful development certificates, the interpretation of planning policy, listed buildings and conservation areas, and the drafting, interpretation and enforcement of planning conditions. He regularly advises on planning matters at all levels, from early strategy through to inquiry, appeal and challenge

Recent work includes:

- Acting for local planning authority (Swale Borough Council) in the largest residential-led planning inquiry ever considered by the planning inspectorate (16 weeks) . The case attracted wide-spread media attention. A decision is currently awaited (as of January 2026);
- Successfully defending, in a six day Inquiry, the refusal of outline permission for 93 dwellings. The case raised complex habitats regulations points, as well as planning and landscape issues ([see here](#)).
- Representing a commercial developer obtaining a certificate of lawfulness and costs in full against the local planning authority, [see here](#).

Post-permission

Michael is able to offer practical advice on all aspects after the grant of permission. He has acted for developers, local authorities and objectors seeking to challenge planning permissions. He is able to provide advice to potential clients – often to urgent deadlines – on all aspects of challenging planning permission.

Environment

Michael is happy to assist in all areas of environmental law, and has regularly advised developers and local planning authorities alike on various aspects of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats Assessments processes.

He acted as junior to Richard Honey KC, and successfully represented the Secretary of State for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities defending a claim brought against alleged EIA failures. The case considered in detail the principles regarding 'salami-slicing' and cumulative effects (see [here](#))

Licensing

Michael has experience in acting for a range of parties in licensing matters, at all levels. He has appeared for both license holders, licensing authorities and acted as legal advisor to Licensing Sub-Committees.

He has acted for a number of parties (both licensees and licensing authorities) who have sought to challenge or defend decisions in the Magistrates' Courts. He has appeared in the Crown Court, including recently successfully defending the revocation of a taxi licence because of a single isolated incident.

Michael is fully familiar with the interim licensing reviews, and is happy to accept instructions at short notice to represent licensees or local authorities in those proceedings.

Compulsory Purchase and Compensation

Michael assisted Isabella Tafur in a multi-million pound compensation case before the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber), which settled during trial. At issue was whether a proposed development on the site would have been granted permission. The principal policy was a complex, 'tiered' policy, and there were significant heritage issues involving multiple Listed Buildings.

Michael also drafted pleadings for a landowner in a claim arising out of an order to purchase four homes. The claim raised complex points, including on situations where there is a "negative equity" and interests on mortgage repayments. The case settled prior to hearing in the Upper Tribunal on terms favourable to the client.

Michael (Led by Mark Westmorland Smith KC) acted for the SST in a complex case involving the assessment of shadow losses to a canine businesses. The case raised detailed issues of expert forensic accountancy; untested legal points about the valuation of businesses; and the approach to the "value to owner" principle.

Michael represented the London Borough of Newham in a contested two-day statutory review challenging a decision to compulsorily purchase land as part of an estate regeneration scheme. The case raised complex questions of interpretation of the CPO Guidance, including how deliverability can be assessed in projects which are not designed to be commercially viable (Led by Douglas Edwards KC) ([see here](#)) (August 2025).

Michael represented a landowner in a claim arising out of an order to purchase four homes. The claim raised complex points, including on situations where there is a "negative equity" and interests on mortgage repayments. The case settled prior to hearing in the Upper Tribunal on terms favourable to the client.

Major Infrastructure Projects

Michael has an expanding practice in the field of major infrastructure projects.

Michael – lead by Andrew Tait KC and Mark Westmoreland Smith – advised the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the Special Development Orders for Wethersfield Airfield and Scampton Airfield for use as housing for asylum seekers (See [here](#) and [here](#), the SDO was made in March 2024) Both attracted substantial media attention.

Michael – acting unled – provided advice to a local planning authority on whether works would amount to commencement of a particular Development Consent Order.

Michael represented Network Rail (lead by Rebecca Clutten) in its application for an Order under the

Transport and Works Act 1992 to build a new station in Cambridge ([see here](#)) (December 2022). The case – heard over six weeks – raised complex points regarding noise, vibration, and electro-magnetic interference. There were also heritage issues and legal issues regarding rights of way over the rails. Michael dealt with the handling of two expert witnesses, and assisted in drafting the Opening and Closing Submissions.

Michael has advised (led by Rebecca Clutten) on the powers of an applicant for a development consent order to enter private land to carry out surveying and related matters under the Planning Act 2008 and the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The case settled as it became academic.

Rating, Council Tax and CIL

Michael assisted in drafting an opinion for a local authority on a number of issues arising under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 including issues of vires, procedure, and the powers of local authorities over public and private land; he has also advised a Welsh authority on whether certain acts were executive or non-executive in character.

Michael maintains an interest in the legal regulation of parking and traffic offences. He represented the London Borough of Ealing in a significant case before the London Tribunal on the enforcement of bus lanes by means of cameras ([see here](#)). He has also provided advice to other London authorities on penalty charge notices imposed on hired vehicles, and on legal restrictions on spending monies raised from parking spaces.

Highways, Commons and Open Spaces

Michael has a keen interest in the law relating to village greens. He has recently successfully appeared in the following leading cases in the High Court:

- *R(oao Bellway Homes) v Kent CC* [2022] EWHC 2593 (Admin). (led by Richard Honey KC) on the meaning of 'trigger events' under the Commons Act 2006 which raised difficult questions as to the interaction between the TVG and planning regimes;
- *R(oao Strack) v SSEFRA* [2023] EWHC 655 (Admin) (led by Douglas Edwards KC) on the approach to deregistration of greens under s. 16 of the 2006 Act. He was also instructed on appeal in [2024] EWCA Civ [2024] EWCA Civ 420.

He also assisted other members of Chambers on whether 'cul-de-sac' ways could be dedicated under section 31 of the Highways Act 1980, and on potential recourses against an individual who submits a vexatious Definitive Map Modification Order.

Public Law/Judicial Review

Michael has a keen interest in all aspects of public law and judicial review. He assisted, unled, defending

a complex judicial review claim for education for asylum seekers under the age of 18 against a local authority, which raised complex points of international and European human rights law (the case settled after Summary Grounds of Resistance).

He acted (led by Ben Collins KC and Nicholas Chapman) for the successful Parole Board in the judicial review of the Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab) direction regarding the release of prisoners, in *R(oao Bailey) v SSJ* [2023] EWHC 821 (Admin). The case attracted substantial media attention (See, e.g. in *The Guardian*).

Enforcement

Michael has substantial experience in planning enforcement, advising both local planning authorities and other parties at all stages of proceedings under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

He has acted (led by Douglas Edwards KC) on the leading authority relating to the removal of operational development in an enforcement notice that targets a change of use. This is a topic that often arises in relation to enforcement, and is of significant interest to practitioners (see [here](#))

Michael Rhimes often acts for local planning authorities and appellants in enforcement Inquiries. His practical, strategic advice, has often resulted in full awards of costs in favour of his client. Previous examples of his work include:

- A one day Enforcement Inquiry (full award of costs in favour of Michael Rhimes' client) (July 2025, decision [here](#))
- A two day Enforcement Inquiry (appeal in favour of Michael Rhimes' client) (March 2025, decision [here](#))
- A three day Enforcement Inquiry relating to the unlawful conversion of a pub in London, which attracted local media attention (see [here](#) and [here](#)) (June 2024, decision [here](#))

He has provided a range of advices – both to local authorities and to developers subject to enforcement notices – to those in need of assistance in this complex area.

Rating, Council Tax and CIL

Michael had substantial experience of Rating, Council Tax and the Community Infrastructure Levy. He is able to advise, often to tight deadlines, on all aspects of these complex areas.

To give an outline of recent work:

- He recovered over £800'000 in CIL due to a local authority in a County Court Part 8 claim (November 2024);
- He was instructed on a complex challenge relating to the "Class G" exemption for Council Tax, although this settled as a result of developments during the VTE hearing (April 2025);
- He has provided advice on whether a "landlocked" units could be liable to rates (January 2026).
- He is also familiar with CIL, having recently advised a local authority on whether CIL could be

claimed after the relevant development was completed.

Michael has an all-round expertise in these areas, and is able to advise on the full range of options open to clients in the Magistrates' Court, VTE (or thereafter the High Court).

He is happy to assist in all areas relating to these matters.

Advertising

Michael assisted in the drafting of a defence to a pre-action protocol letter for advertisement consent for a well-known high street brand on Oxford Circus. The case involved a complex interaction between the regimes of express and deemed consent under the Control of Advertisement Regulations 2007.

County Court Work

Michael has represented a number of authorities – and the Government – seeking strike outs or summary judgments. He represented a London authority against a vexatious litigant, and successfully obtained (twice) a general civil restraining order against him).

Qualifications

BPP University Law School, Bar Professional Training Course (Outstanding) (2018 – 2019)

University of Oxford, Bachelor of Civil Law (2014 – 2015)

Queen Mary, Law (First Class Honours) (2011 – 2014)

Scholarships, Awards and Other Experience

Bar Awards & Scholarships

- Sir Joseph Priestly Award (Inner Temple) (2019) (awarded to undertake a clerkship at the Constitutional Court of South Africa)
- Princess Royal Scholarship (Inner Temple) (2018) (awarded to study the Bar Professional Training Course)
- Pro Bono Award – awarded by BPP to study the BPTC (2018)
- Excellence Award – awarded by BPP to study the BPTC (2018)
- Gilbert Murray Trust Award; Global Justice Internship Fund; Southern African Judicial Assistance Project (awarded for various projects in 2015)

University Awards & Scholarships

- Leverhulme trust Prize (excellence in final year at University) (2014)
 - Oxford University Prize (award for top marks Equity & Trust Law) (2013)
 - Property Law Prize (award for top marks in Property Law) (2012)
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Selected Publications

Is it really lawful to conduct licensing sub-committee hearings remotely? A sceptical view, Journal of Licensing, (November 2022)

Forfeiting proceeds: civil forfeiture, the right to property and the Constitution. South African Law Journal (May 2021)

Greening the Law: the Reception of Environmental Law and Its Enforcement in International Law and European Union Law 2018 Columbia Journal of European Law

Charting the Charter: A UK Guide to the Application of the EU Charter, 2017 (3) Judicial Review 295.

Standing their Ground: Why are EU Standing Rules for Direct Actions (still) so Restrictive? 2016 European Journal of Legal Studies (online)

Cited with approval in Opinion of Advocate General Wathelet in C-244/16 P Industrias Químicas del Valle v Commission ECLI:EU:C:2017:635

Professional Memberships

- UKELA
- PEBA
- ALBA
- CPA

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