Dear Sir/Madam,


Firstly, I am responding by letter because I thought the format of the available response form made unreasonable assumptions about the time available to lay-respondents to pursue issues around the Core Strategy.

So far as I am concerned, the consultation process in connection with the Core Strategy has been a sham. I fail to see how there can be a meaningful consultation around what seems to have been a more or less predetermined outcome.

The narrative has worked backwards from the point where central government imposed on RVBC the requirement to facilitate the provision of an unspecified but substantial number of homes during the plan period. Outside consultants, presumably with a knowledge of what might pass
Matters with an inspector, have come up with a preferred annual housing completion figure. The borough appears to have been bullied into accepting this figure because it believes/hopes that it will be accepted by the government-appointed inspector making the final decision. Even so, the inspector could reject the figure and insist on a (probably) higher number or (unlikely) lesser number. So, for all the appearance of consultation, a government appointee will take the final decision on the number of houses the borough will have to provide during the plan period.

Essentially, all that has been left for the local community to comment upon is the location of the planned new houses. The outcome of this process appears to plan for the siting of a disproportionately large number of the new houses in Clitheroe, and particularly on the Stanlend estate site. These are perfectly valid planning grounds for objecting to the scale of development planned for Clitheroe: there are insufficient school places to accommodate the
additional numbers of children, and no plans at the moment to address this issue; local transport infrastructure is unlikely to be able to accommodate increased demand, but there are no current plans for any improvements; it is highly unlikely that local employment opportunities will be available to the influx of workers, so a quantum leap in commuting looks inevitable; similarly, there are no current plans to provide the additional health services which will be required. So, the new housing looks set to be provided in a setting lacking the requisite infrastructure.

Disturbingly, there is already some evidence to suggest that legitimate and allowable planning objections will be overridden in pursuit of the objective of delivering the Government's desired number of housing starts. This appeared to happen in connection with the recent planning application for housing development at a site in Heanor. In this case, there appeared to be significant planning issues around transport and access which even the developer acknowledged. Even so, and in a way which seemed almost perverse, the determining inspector allowed the application.
Quite apart from the foregoing, I believe that the strategy being pursued by central government with regard to housing i.e. predict and provide is not just flawed, it is plain wrong. This country does not enjoy food security, it does not benefit from energy security, it is entering a time of stressed water resources. Instead of trying to maintain housing supply, the government ought to be managing demand. The present estimate for the UK population of 70,000,000 by 2030 has frightening implications. The housing development proposed in the Core Strategy 2008-2028 would be unwelcome, but just about acceptable if that were it, the end of growth. What is really concerning, however, is that it looks highly likely, on present trends, that in 2032 we will be revisiting this issue, arguing over a further tranche of 415,000 houses. Infinite growth is not possible and, sooner or later, a government of whichever hue is going to have to confront that reality. (continued on next page)
I believe the Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008 – 2028: A Local Plan for Ribble Valley to be unsound. The Plan allows for housing development on a scale which current and planned infrastructure seems unlikely to be able to accommodate, particularly so with reference to Clitheroe.

Additionally, it is my opinion that the government-driven housebuilding targets being imposed on this, and other boroughs, pay no heed to related issues which are becoming increasingly existentially significant.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]