Core Strategy Consultation
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
CLITHEROE
BB7 2RA

Date: 14th June 2012
My Ref: 
Your Ref: CH/EL
Please ask for: 
Direct Dial: 
Email: 

Dear Sir / Madam

RIBBLE VALLEY PUBLICATION CORE STRATEGY

Thank you for consulting Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council on the above plan. We are pleased to provide our comments, focusing on issues which have a cross-boundary dimension and are therefore caught by the Duty to Co-operate.

The key issue in this regard is the approach set out in the Core Strategy to new housing. Blackburn with Darwen's defined housing market area adjoins Ribble Valley's, and in reality there is a degree of overlap in the northern part of Blackburn.

In summary we are supportive of the approach set out in Ribble Valley's Core Strategy. We consider that it integrates well with that put forward in Blackburn with Darwen's Core Strategy, and will help work towards both authorities achieving their desired housing outcomes. The following are key elements of your Core Strategy's housing approach which we consider will contribute to this.

The housing target of 200 per year
We note that with the imminent (though not yet implemented) abolition of Regional Strategies, Ribble Valley has needed to establish its own evidence base to support the proposed housing target. In this regard we have reviewed the "HEADROOM" report prepared by NLP and the way it has been translated into your Core Strategy. Overall we consider that the NLP report represents a robust basis on which to establish housing targets, and that there has been a logical approach to using the evidence to inform policy.

The NLP report considers a number of scenarios, highlighting as a key variable the assumed rate of migration. It notes that Ribble Valley is highly dependent on net inward migration to maintain a stable and growing population; and also that practically it would not be possible to stop in-migration even if this were desired. It is therefore appropriate for the housing target to continue to assume a significant level of net in-migration.

At the same time, it is a clear policy objective of Ribble Valley to prioritise the needs of its existing population, particularly those of working age who may otherwise be forced to leave the area because of high house prices. Alongside this it is an objective of Blackburn with Darwen to retain
a greater proportion of its population and to reduce the loss of skilled labour, by providing high quality new housing to meet the needs of selective buyers.

In view of these policy objectives in both authorities, we are supportive of the adoption of a housing target for Ribble Valley that assumes some decline in the rate of net in-migration as compared to past trends (which according to scenario A would give a target of 220 per annum rather than 200). This will increase the likelihood of would-be in-migrants considering other nearby areas, including parts of Blackburn with Darwen.

**The affordable housing target, and the overall emphasis of housing policy**

It is our reading of the Core Strategy that there is to be an emphasis on providing "local needs" housing including affordable housing and housing for elderly people (Key Statements H2 and H3). The provision of significant amounts of affordable housing is consistent with the objective of reducing out-migration of young economically active people, and with the related need identified in the NLP study to support job growth within Ribble Valley by increasing the size of the local labour force.

We consider that this approach provides a good fit with Blackburn with Darwen's Core Strategy policy priorities, which include the expansion of Blackburn with Darwen's upper-market / executive housing offer. We anticipate that the operation of the two Core Strategies alongside one another will broaden the area within which such housing is delivered, away from its traditional focus which has been almost exclusively in the Ribble Valley, thus increasing the choice of housing available in the wider area.

**The spatial distribution of new housing**

We are supportive of the proposed spatial distribution of new housing, including the development of a strategic site at Clitheroe. Focusing new housing towards Ribble Valley's larger existing settlements will help reinforce the existing pattern of development in Lancashire which we consider to be generally sustainable.

In conclusion we are strongly supportive of the approach that your authority has set out in its Publication Core Strategy, particularly in relation to housing which is a key area in which cross-boundary issues arise. We believe that implementation of your strategy alongside our adopted Core Strategy will lead to a joined-up approach to planning for housing across our common boundary and will support both of our authorities' key housing objectives.

We would be very happy to attend the public examination into the Core Strategy to support you in promoting this approach to the Inspector, and in resisting any representations that you might receive advocating an alternative approach.

Finally please do not hesitate to contact me if you require clarification on any of the points in this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Planning Policy Team Leader