Head of Regeneration and Housing
Forward Planning Team
R.V.B.C
Council Offices
Clitheroe

Dear Sir,

RIBBLE VALLEY CORE STRATEGY 2008-2028 - CONSULTATION

Thank you for your letter of 3rd May inviting me to comment on the above.

I would like to complement you on a well-written document.

I would like to comment on the following Strategic Objectives, with reference to Whalley in particular.

3.11 Respecting bio-diversity and the environment

I welcome that the proposed number of housing units for Whalley has been reduced. However, Developers must be monitored heavily with objective 3.11 in mind. Biodiversity does not just relate to special sites. The charm of Whalley is that the trees and greenery being so near the village centre, and the wild life they support, add quality to our lives. They are important for the future sustainability of our planet. Deer, foxes, bats and plenty of birds are part of our experience of living here. Developers’ plans have not given me confidence that they are being encouraged to sustain this. For instance, on the planning application 3/2011/0111 I noted that a “protected” tree was right next door to housing. Noise and light pollution from housing will not foster the wildlife in and around trees, however “protected”. This kind of thing requires you to be vigilant. I would like to have seen more assurance in the Strategy that, at a local and quite “ordinary” level, those responsible for housing and industrial developments should have to pay heed to the biodiversity around them. If this were so, I believe some of our fears in Whalley on the proposed housing developments would be reduced.

3.13 Ensure Housing Provision meets local needs

You have identified a need for Affordable Housing. You do not seem to have made a connection with one of your earlier findings that one third of the population in Ribble Valley is over sixty-five. Could it be that one solution to the Affordable Housing need would be to free up houses which are currently occupied by single people growing old?
Despite identifying the large proportion of the population which are over 65, this does not get the same prominence in your document as the needs of those requiring cheaper housing. Freeing up the market by attracting elderly people out of their houses might be another way of approaching this problem. Whalley is a good spot for less-ambulant people, being relatively flat, and at a communications hub.

3.14 Improve competitiveness of local businesses

I support your approach in 7 that development for industry will be on a land allocation rather than developer-led approach. Every effort must be made to prevent Ribble Valley becoming a “Dormitory Area” for other areas. I think industrial development is more important than housing. You rightly point out that there are plenty of vacant properties in surrounding towns. You also point to the high education attainment levels in the Valley. We need to provide more nursery units for small businesses.

3.16 Support Retail Business

Whalley is a victim of its own success. It is flat, compact and at a communications hub. It is however at a “tipping point” in my opinion. Its successful retailers are supported by; a) local people who walk to them, b) people from a wider radius who park on the roadside for quick purchases, and c) people who come from far away to at least two award-winning shops. It is now so congested, and parking is so difficult, that members of the last two categories will cease to be attracted here. I believe that your additional housing developments will kill the goose that has laid the golden egg in Whalley. It is my opinion that if Whalley is allowed to expand too much, it will cease to be an effective centre for businesses to trade in. It will then lose its raison d’etre as a village.

3.17 Innovate and build local tourism

My comments in this section may be cross-referenced to what I say elsewhere. In particular, the destruction of green landscape in Whalley will reduce its attraction as a centre for visitors who include walkers, people following Simon Jenkyns’ England’s Thousand Best Churches, Abbey visitors and those on leisure shopping trips. Congestion will make it an unpleasant place to visit. Your housing plans for this village do not support objective 3.17.

I found this to be a weak section of the plan. Maybe I missed something but I did not find references to research on why people currently visit the Valley, what we could build on and where there might be room for some creative thinking.

As a walker, I hope I misunderstood your statement in 10.27 that you will “seek to ensure the retention of footpaths…..which are heavily used.” I am sure you are aware that there is a procedure to be followed in the event of Development which threatens any established footpath, however little used. I would like you to reconsider the wording in
that statement. The footpaths throughout Ribble Valley are a huge asset. I know that visitors from local towns come here to experience the remoteness of these often hidden tracks.

I found very little reference in the Core Strategy document to the potential of art, music and theatre to attract tourists, create employment and enhance the quality of life of those living in Ribble Valley.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]