Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe BB7 2RA

Date 1 June 2012

To Core Strategy Consultation

I'm writing to voice my objections to the proposal to build 1,670 new houses in Clitheroe, which will have a huge impact on Clitheroe and its residents. Little or no thought seems to be given as to how existing infrastructures would cope with such a large development of over sixteen hundred extra houses, which could equate to an influx of between four and six thousand additional residents to the town.

Demands on existing education facilities would be hit hard, with nursery, primary and secondary schools not being able to offer sufficient places to Ribble Valley residents and an adequate level of education, with overcrowded class sizes which would affect not just the children concerned, but the future skills and investment to the town.

The Health Centre is presently working at full capacity and would not be able to cope with the additional patients this development would create. It has recently undergone building work to provide additional space in order to accommodate the present patient requirements. No additional land is available at its existing site for further expansion.

All public services, which are currently being reduced because of Government cut backs, would not be able to cope with such a huge increased demand on its resources. Police, ambulance service, fire brigade, highways and refuse collection services would all be affected, resulting in a reduced level of service for the residents of the Ribble Valley.

As there are no large employers in the Ribble Valley, the majority of the residents from the new developments would be commuting in and out of Clitheroe. The additional traffic would cause considerable congestion on all roads leading into and out of the town. Access onto the bypass from Pendle road is already a very fraught and dangerous experience. It is well documented as to how dangerous this junction is, and despite numerous campaigns to have it improved and made safe by changing the junction, or ideally building a roundabout, funding has not been available. In the present economical climate there will be no chance of funding to make this junction safe.

People will avoid this junction putting greater demands on other routes in and out of Clitheroe and using inadequate link roads in built up areas as “rat runs” to access main roads. Hayhurst Road, Goose Butts, Peel Park Avenue and Little Moor Road would be examples that I would site as probable “rat runs”. Increases of traffic on these types of roads would inevitably lead to congestion and potential accidents with pedestrians.
Parking is already at a premium in Clitheroe, both on street parking and at car parks. People are already parking vehicles with two wheels on the footways, restricting access for pedestrians. Double parking in restricted areas by people using disabled badges is also a far too often occurrence, whilst designated disabled parking areas are left unoccupied. If Clitheroe residents can’t park in or near the town centre they will shop out of town in Blackburn, Burnley or Preston, where they can park. This would lead to a loss of business for the shops in Clitheroe at a time when trading conditions are already poor. Clitheroe as a Market town can’t afford to have many more empty shops without it losing some of its charm and character.

Finally to finish on a more positive note we do agree that there does need to be more dwellings built for local people who can’t afford current market prices, but surely our aim must be to integrate them within the current communities at an acceptable rate. New dwellings should be built in the main towns and villages on such a scale as to fit in with the existing towns and village’s current size also taking into account the infrastructure and any possible realistic improvements that can be made. This would allow young people to stay and live in the areas they have been born in and contribute to a more balanced community. Feasibility studies need to be carried out to identify areas where these dwellings are required and can be built, if possible using brown belt land instead of green belt. Public consultation should take place once these areas have been identified to decide the best way forward.

The Ribble Valley Council must remember that it is in office to represent the resident’s needs and requirements and not to ride roughshod over their clearly expressed and strong opposition. It is far better that the views and requirements of the residents of the Ribble Valley are known, taken into account and where possible met. Even if the core strategy process takes longer to achieve it will stand a lot better chance of being the right strategy for the residents and the future of the Ribble Valley.

Yours faithfully