

17 December 2013

Colin Hirst
Head of Regeneration and Housing
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Clitheroe
Lancashire BB7 2RA

Dear Colin

**RIBBLE VALLEY CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (DPD) and the
DUTY TO CO-OPERATE**

I write with regard to the Duty to Co-operate and the collaboration between us relating to the preparations and content of our respective planning documents in particular your Submission Core Strategy, our adopted Core Strategy and our draft Local Plan 2 – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies.

I can confirm that the Council is satisfied that there has been ongoing cooperation between us, throughout the stages in our respective plan making processes, through long established structures including PLACE, Pennine Lancashire Planning Officer Group (PLPOG), Pennine Lancashire Housing Board (PLHB) and the Lancashire Development Plan Officer Group (DPOG). The discussions at these various forums have informed the preparation of each authority's plans.

In addition we have worked collaboratively, via the above groups, on a number of initiatives including the preparation of the 'Pennine Lancashire Spatial Guide' which sets out the planning priorities and role of places across Pennine Lancashire.

The cross boundary issues which we agree are of strategic importance to both our authorities include the following: -

- Housing provision
- Green Belt
- Infrastructure provision
- Samlesbury EZ
- Gypsies and travellers

Taking each in turn I can highlight the issues that we have discussed and my understanding of the current position. I acknowledge that in several cases there are matters between us that are ongoing. I acknowledge too that in those instances where issues are outstanding and have not to date been resolved this does not mean that I am not satisfied that the duty to cooperate has been met. I am comfortable that we have an established working relationship and satisfactory arrangements in-place for continuing engagement on cross boundary issues and in particular with regards to the following:-

Housing provision

Housing growth is a key matter for both authorities. Blackburn with Darwen has expressly supported the housing target and the overall approach to housing provision included in your Submission Core Strategy. I consider that your Submission Core Strategy is complementary to our adopted Core Strategy.

You will be aware that the Council has since objected to the changes in your submission plan, relating to the increase in housing numbers and the underlying approach to housing provision, which have emerged from the recommendations in the 'Ribble Valley Housing Requirement Review Update (May 2013)'. In relation to our objection, I will be submitting further statements with regards to the matters raised by the Inspector and I will be attending the hearing sessions in relation to the Matter 2: The Strategy and Matter 3: Housing.

I do appreciate that perhaps owing to the time constraints of your examination that there was no opportunity to engage with us and other stakeholders on the Housing Requirement Review Update

recommendations. Going forward the Council is willing to engage positively with you during the examination process to identify a strategic approach to housing provision in Ribble Valley which is compatible to the adopted strategy in Blackburn with Darwen and will not have implications for the delivery of the Blackburn with Darwen Core Strategy.

Green Belt

As you are aware Blackburn with Darwen has recently completed a Green Belt study to inform the preparation of its Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies. This was not a strategic review. The scope of the study covered land along the inner Green Belt boundary around Blackburn and Darwen and assessed whether any land included within the current boundary could be considered for removal from the Green Belt without affecting the integrity of the Green Belt.

A number of workshops with stakeholders and neighbouring authorities including Ribble Valley were held to consider and feed into the methodology for and the conclusions from the study.

As you are aware the study has recommended that land in north Blackburn, adjoining our shared boundary, could be removed from the Green Belt. Our Publication draft plan (as considered by Council Forum on the 7th of November 2013) is proposing that this land be allocated for housing development; Policy 16 expects 450 dwellings to be delivered on this site.

During our discussions you indicated that at officer level it is unlikely that there will be any concerns with regards to the proposed Green Belt release in North Blackburn. I acknowledge that this position will need to be confirmed formally during consultation on the published Plan due to start at the end of January.

Infrastructure provision

The proposed Clitheroe-Manchester rail connection is a mutual benefit to both authorities and we both indicated at our meeting that we will continue to support the work of the Pennine Lancashire Rail Board.

Samlesbury Enterprise Zone (EZ)

Blackburn with Darwen acknowledges that the EZ has significant potential to support the delivery of its housing and economic growth agenda due to its proximity to Blackburn. We anticipate that a number of housing allocations in north Blackburn will offer an attractive housing offer to people working in the employment area. At our meetings you were in support of our position.

We discussed previously that going forward, as Ribble Valley prepare the detail of their site allocations document, cross-boundary issues may arise whereby each authority is in direct competition for attracting housing investment. This would particularly be the case if Ribble Valley promotes growth in some of the neighbouring villages in north Blackburn including Mellor/Mellor Brook and Osbaldeston.

I am confident we will continue our dialogue on these issues.

Gypsies and travellers

At our last meeting we agreed that further discussion between the two authorities will be part of future work at PLACE. This has not progressed to date but I believe this will be picked up early in the New Year.

As you are aware the majority of local/district authorities across Lancashire have independently prepared their own needs assessments. You will also be aware that since our last meeting it has been acknowledged by DPOG (Development Plan Officer's Group) that there needs to be a forum for authorities to meet to share information and discuss issues of mutual concern including policy development, delivery of new pitches, public and political concerns. In response the 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Forum' has recently been set up and is scheduled to meet twice a year. This forum will afford further opportunity for all members including Ribble Valley and

Blackburn with Darwen and neighbouring authorities to address duty to co-operate issues with regards to Gypsies and Travellers.

As I already indicated above I am satisfied that we have engaged positively with each other in the preparation of our respective plans and I look forward to our continuing co-operation on the range of issues referred to above, including through the examination of your Core Strategy.

Yours sincerely

Rea Psillidou (Miss)
Strategic Planning Policy Manager

