RBTA
RICHMOND BUSINESS & TOURISM ASSOCIATION

Planning Policy
Richmondshire District Council,
Swale House,
Frenchgate,
Richmond,
DL10 4JE

13 September 2012

Dear Sirs

We write in response to the Local Core Strategy Plan Proposed Submission.

The Association has been consulted in relation to this plan on numerous occasions and have fed back at presentations and by email and letter. We are disappointed that the key points that we have consistently made about the economic development in the town have not been incorporated. These are supported by the RBTA Planning Statement [attached]

Whilst we accept that there is limited scope for building new houses in Richmond due to the historic nature of the town, limited brownfield space and the open spaces green belt around the town, we do not agree with the premise of the Strategic Approach at Chap 3.1.35. This suggests that there is limited capacity for economic development in Richmond. The two are not in fact linked.

Richmond is an ideal place for new and emerging businesses, especially digitally based ones as The City Secret has so ably and successfully demonstrated. 'Prestige type developments' such as business parks can be found in or around any town, but the unique setting of Richmond Market place and the surrounding town cannot. This unique selling point needs to be incorporated into the plan.

We also note that the plan recognises Richmond's important tourism offer and scope for creative industries but then fails to build on this. By emphasising the potential and importance of Catterick/Colburn, the plan will inevitably result in the direction of resource there, attracting non-tourism business out of Richmond. Members are concerned that if this policy was followed there is a high risk that the town would ossify and deteriorate as a consequence.

However this section is rather at odds with the Sub Area Strategies in Chap 3.2 which identifies the need to sustain Richmond as the principle town and historic centre of Richmondshire, with the development of sustainable transport links between Richmond and the Garrison area and the development of complementary and supporting businesses. There is an acceptance that the anticipated inflow of funding will be more than Richmond and Catterick centres can cope with hence the expansion of the brownfield sites around Colburn.

Could you therefore clarify the contradiction and alter the plan so that the strategic approach in Chap 3.1 is more accurately aligned with other strategies.

The RBTA wishes Richmond to be a vibrant principal town with a wide range of businesses all contributing to its economic development; we do not wish it to become an expensive retirement town or an exclusive commuter settlement, and we want the District Council's plan to more accurately reflect and promote this.

Yours sincerely

Philip Wicks
Chair
Richmond Business & Tourism Association

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RBTA PLANNING STATEMENT

The RBTA wants to see a sustainable future for the four key areas in Richmond and Catterick, which forms the focus for Richmond, Catterick and the surrounding area. The key areas identified as Gallowfields Trading Estate, Richmond Town Centre, Catterick Garrison Town Centre and the A1 corridor industrial estates. These key commercial areas should all operate on an even basis with no one area being promoted above an other as this could distort the local economy and potentially be detrimental to the diversity and offering of the local enterprises. The areas should be able to support local jobs and allow people to work locally rather than the area becoming a dormitory town for Teesside and beyond.

Gallowfields Trading Estate
The emphasis of the Gallowfields Trading should remain as light industry, and workshops, and while it is recognised there is some retail on the estate it should not be promoted on the whole as a retail park as this would be detrimental to the Richmond Town Centre, but there may be some scope for a contained retail park as a boost to the overall retail offering to Richmond.

The RBTA would be keen to improve the access roads into the estate as it would benefit current and prospective businesses. Funding has been an issue with the access road, but it was felt that where redundant land were sold for housing such as the Highways Depot, then planning gain should be used to fund improvements.

Richmond Town Centre
It is imperative that the town centre remains a sustainable commercial centre which supports the town and the surrounding area. Tourism has a role, but tourism alone cannot support the commercial centre.

The pressure to convert from commercial to residential should be strongly resisted as once out of commercial use buildings do not easily revert back. The long term availability of commercial properties is vital to the sustainability of the town's commercial heart. If the commercial residential mix goes in favour of residential the danger is that there are too few commercial buildings to support a diverse retail and commercial offering which could become a vicious circle of business not getting the customers and moving out.

RBTA
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Commercial buildings in the town centre should include a healthy mix of retail, pub, restaurant as well as office use. Primarily to serve the town and the surrounding area, while tourism is important and has much to offer it is much more cyclical.

Catterick Garrison Town Centre
The Garrison Town Centre is seen as complementary to Richmond Town Centre as there will be larger, purpose made retail and leisure units. This will compete with the larger retail parks such as Teesside Park and the Metro Centre rather than the indigenous shops.

Competition between the two centres must be avoided at all costs as this will result in a less diverse and therefore less prosperous community and would be to the detriment of the whole area.

The RBTA would like to see any planning gain being used wisely to link Catterick and Richmond with a sustainable transport link, such as a light railway. This would ensure that the two centres remain connected.

A1 Corridor
This has been identified as the zone for larger industrial premises and any pressure to allow commercial space to be converted or part converted to residential should be resisted. This forms the backbone for employment in the local area.

"Green Belt"
The area surrounding Richmond and Catterick is predominantly agricultural land and woodland, this is valuable to the setting of Richmond, Catterick and the surrounding villages.

Where the land is agricultural or woodland any change of use would be considered detrimental to the setting of the built environment. The exception would be a high quality leisure development such as a golf course or a large scale hotel development which would generate a material and enduring number of jobs.

The re-use of commercial land, such as quarries, redundant buildings would be supported as this would generate employment and benefit the wider community.

Local Economy
By having a diverse commercial base, supported in the four key areas, this provides the backbone for local jobs. The provision of local jobs is vital as this means that people working locally are less reliant on cars, cause less congestion and are more likely to spend their money in the local businesses.

RBTA
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Richmond should be regarded as the regional hub for transport and the appropriate provisions should be made to encourage this.

The local transport infrastructure is important to the viability of the local economy. The RBTA would like to see a coherent regional strategy which encourages access by private and public transport. This must be supported by the provision of sufficient, well located car and coach parking which is competitively and equably priced.