

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION**

**COUNCILLOR DAVE HARLING**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING**

**DIRECTOR:**

**BRIAN BAILEY**

**DATE: 11.06.2012**

**MARKET IN THE MALL**

External consultants have now been appointed to handle the marketing and promotion of the new market to boost customer footfall, increase turnover for traders and improve the shopper experience. A number of promotional events are planned for the next few weeks and months and a marketing plan is being prepared. Improved external signage on Church Street and Ainsworth Street has now been approved by the Mall and will be in place soon. Stall lettings now total 92, which equates to 73% occupation. The Markets Office has received three applications from existing traders wishing to take extra units (two of these are now confirmed) and interest from another three traders from outside.

The Mary Portas Review reinforced the importance of markets' role in the social and economic life of a town centre. The review recognised that markets are an important part of the retail mix and can add vitality to town centres. They also provide the perfect conditions for micro and start up businesses to try out business ideas at low cost. Following on from this, 'Love Your Local Market' a national markets promotion is being held to celebrate and boost the role of markets across the country over 2 weeks from the 23<sup>rd</sup> June to the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2012. Blackburn and Darwen markets will both be promoting and raising awareness of their offer and are planning a number of initiatives during this period.

**FORMER MARKETS SITE REDEVELOPMENT**

A preferred developer has been agreed for the former markets site and an exclusivity agreement is awaiting completion. Discussions and negotiations are now continuing with foodstore operators regarding design and layout, integration with the Mall shopping centre and the proposed new bus station. The expected date for the start of demolition is the end of October 2012.

**HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION**

Following Council approval in January 2012, local consultation with residents and other stakeholder groups has been carried out. The purpose of the Article 4 direction is to remove permitted development rights for small HMOs. Currently HMO developments for up to five people do not require planning permission.

No comments were received during the consultation and a report will be brought to the Council to confirm the direction. The direction will come into effect on 23 February 2013 covering the wards of Shear Brow, Corporation Park, Wensley Fold, Ewood, Sunnyhurst and Sudell.

## **NEW POLICIES ON HOUSE CONVERSIONS**

A Supplementary Planning Document was approved by Executive Board in April 2012 to provide more detailed guidance on planning policy H9 relating to proposals for HMOs and residential conversions and subdivisions. The SPD provides detailed guidance on issues of impact on local amenity and character of the area from proposals for HMOs and confirms the minimum local housing space standards required to provide good quality living accommodation for residents.

## **RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)**

Revisions to the Residential Design Guide SPD were considered by the Planning Cross Party Members Working Group in April 2012. The revisions concerned guidance on extensions to residential properties to enable home owners greater flexibility in achieving appropriate extensions. Public consultation will take place in July before the revised SPD is brought back to the Council prior to being adopted in the autumn.

## **TRANSPORT UPDATE**

### **Darwen Rail Station**

The official re-opening following the recent station improvements was attended by the Executive Member for Regeneration, Jake Berry MP, local Councillors and dignitaries from Northern Rail and Network Rail. The works have been funded through the Council's Capital Programme (£200k) and National Station Improvement Programme funding (£200k) allocated by Network Rail and Northern Rail and include new waiting shelters, the resurfacing of both platforms, a new station wide customer service information and public announcement system, the repair and repainting of fencing, new balustrades and handrails, improvements to ramps and step access, new signage, ticket machines and landscaping improvements.

Unfortunately, in the short time since the ceremony, there has been extensive vandalism to some of the improvements. The Council is working closely with Network Rail who are currently analysing the 24 hour recorded CCTV footage.

### **My Mill Hill Art Project**

Between January and March this year over 200 children, young people and pensioners were inspired by local artist Alastair Nicholson to create a colourful and safe corridor for local bus and rail services supported by the Local Transport Plan 3 and the Designated Line Community Rail Fund. The project was managed jointly by the Council and the East Lancashire Line Community Rail Partnership. The three local schools involved in the project (St Peters RC, St Luke & St Phillips CofE and Meadowhead Infants) were all invited to a ceremony on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2012 to officially launch the works and were awarded certificates and posters from local company PROMAT who were very keen to be involved. Works included full CCTV coverage at Mill Hill Station, a rail safety banner on fencing opposite the Blackburn bound platform, two colourful panels on the rail bridge and six colourful panels installed at two bus shelters near to the station.

### **Blackburn Bus Station**

Public consultation on the plans for the new bus station which forms part of the Pennine Reach project, has taken place at Blackburn market. Subject to final approval for the Pennine Reach project by the DfT, the bus station works could start as early as April 2013 with a completion date of October/November 2014.

### **NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LEGISLATION**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012 the Law Commission published a consultation paper with provisional proposals for reform of the legal framework relating to taxis and private hire vehicles. The current law on taxis is fragmented and complex, some of it dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is proposed that all vehicles would be subject to national minimum safety standards and for private hire vehicles, these would replace more than 340 sets of local regulations. This will reduce the burden on business because once appropriately licensed, a private hire firm could work freely across the country, without geographical restrictions. If adopted, the proposals would prevent local authorities limiting the number of taxi licences, introduce disability training for drivers and provide more enforcement powers for local authorities against out of borough vehicles and drivers. The proposals retain the distinction between taxis which can "ply for hire" on the street or a rank and private hire vehicles which can only be pre-booked.

The consultation ends on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2012. More details can be found at [http://lawcommission.justice.gov.uk/docs/cp203\\_taxi-and-private-hire-services.pdf](http://lawcommission.justice.gov.uk/docs/cp203_taxi-and-private-hire-services.pdf).