

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: IAN RICHARDSON**

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RAIL

Over the last decade the Council has continued to invest in the Borough's rail infrastructure, to meet ambitious growth and sustainable transport objectives. Investment from the Council and Central Government's Growth Deal has enabled the operation of all-day half hourly rail services to Manchester from December 2017, as specified within the newly let Northern Rail franchise through Rail North. The borough has seen strong recent growth in terms of rail patronage. Blackburn, as a major hub for travel in East Lancashire, was used by over 1.27 million passengers in 2016/17 (up 10% from 2015/16) and Darwen by over 300,000 passengers (up 37% from 2015/16) although the figure in 2015/16 was affected by engineering works on the line. The Council continues to push for future improvements, including better services to Preston, West Yorkshire and Ribble Valley through Transport for the North and Network Rail investment strategies and programmes.

DARWEN TOWN CENTRE

The public realm design for the Market Square was presented to the Design Reference Group at DACA for comment in November and is now agreed. Detailed surveys, design development, material palette and planting plans are now underway with tenders out the last week of February to contractors who have expressed an interest through the new framework. Updated 3D visuals will be available in early February and will be promoted on the site, through the media and to residents to keep everyone fully informed. A new external entrance for the Annex will also be installed with improved signage. We have programmed the contractors to be on site in April and work is also being undertaken to get operational issues and construction phasing informed by the needs of the markets and surrounding businesses as well as the events planned during the period. The work will be completed by the Autumn in good time for the Christmas trading period.

CATHEDRAL QUARTER

In December, Cathedral Square hosted the Grace Davies homecoming X Factor Concert for ITV. This was a fantastic success with approximately 4,000 people attending and enjoying the experience of live music from Grace accompanied by Sharon Osbourne and was the finale to a day spent in the Borough visiting all her old haunts. Starbucks opened in December filling the last of the ground floor units in Cathedral Square following on from Café Northcote, Turtle Bay and A Mano Italian restaurant. All have reported good Christmas trading periods. The offices in One Cathedral Square are now almost fully occupied with only one 2nd floor suite remaining which is currently being marketed.

MILL HILL PILOT 20mph LIMIT

The Mill Hill 20 mph pilot has been in trial for three years now. The scheme was designed with the primary focus of being sign only with no engineering features to establish if this alone would bring the speeds down. The results have proved conclusively that without any engineering features and or physical alterations to the highway that 20mph signs do not affect driver behaviour and this potentially leads to

a dangerous situation for road users. The pilot has ended and the roads will revert to 30pmh limit.

NORTHGATE REGENERATION

The £16.9 million regeneration of the Northgate area is progressing with detailed design underway on a number of schemes. The investment includes the new Cinema, Blakey Moor Townscape Heritage scheme, improved public realm in front of King George’s Hall and the Square in front of the Victoria Street building as well as the planned improvements to access and the highways infrastructure into the north side of the town centre. We are now progressing the acquisition of part of the Blakey Moor terrace after lengthy negotiations and work is underway on 35 Northgate (former Baroque). The area is becoming the focus of the new embryonic night time economy alongside Cathedral Quarter with new businesses opened including Bees Knees, Shhh Cocktail Bar, and the Lemon Tree with Hugo Burritos to follow.

The planning application for the new Cinema and car park on the former Waves site will be submitted week commencing 15th January.

HOUSING UPDATE

We have 11 active developers in the Borough working across 15 sites yielding over 1300 homes. In addition we are in discussions with two new entrants to the market who will soon be commencing with developments in Darwen. One of the market entrants is a large housebuilder new to Blackburn and the other is a small boutique developer who will soon be submitting an application for the Belgrave Mill site in Darwen. This was a previously stalled site and shows great confidence in the market within Darwen. A list of the developers is shown in the below table.

Developer	Site	No of houses	Comment
Persimmon Homes	Parsonage Rd	85	On site in construction
Wainhomes	Gib Lane Phase B	79	On site in construction
Wainhomes	Red House Gardens	35	On site in construction
Wainhomes	Yew Tree Drive	272	Mobilising
Hearle Homes	Crossfield Street	38	On site in construction
Edgworth Developments	Crowthorn Village	25	On site in construction
McDermott Homes	Eclipse Mill	51	On site in construction
McDermott Homes	Roman Road	15	On site in construction
Together Housing	Ellenshaw	46	On site in construction
Kingswood Homes	Gib Lane Phase A	167	On site in construction
Story Homes	Gib Lane Phase C	205	On site in construction
Places for People	Newfield Drive	36	Completed
To be published when contracts exchanged, late January	Pole Lane North	126	Mobilising to commence in Feb 2018
Keepmoat	Shorey Bank	119	On site in construction
Flitcraft	Waterfield Mill	27	Mobilising to commence in Feb 2018

Younique Housing	Belgrave Mill	61	Planning application to submit Feb 2018, hope to start on site in Summer 2018
		1387	

HOUSING SALES UPDATE

- Kingswood Homes (Green Hills at Gib Lane) – 17 units sold / reserved, even though the show home is yet to open (due end Jan).
- McDermott Homes (Eclipse Mill at Feniscowles) – 10 units reserved, developer really pleased with the sales rate.
- Persimmon Homes (Parsonage Road) - 62 units sold / reserved.
- Wainhomes (Gib Lane) – 33 units sold /reserved.
- Wainhomes (Bear Hotel site) – 18 units sold / reserved.

In terms of developer feedback:

- Completions and reservations are progressing well, better than anticipated.
- Buyers are coming from a mix of areas, although there have been more local buyers to date.
- The urban extension sites are selling to professional working people, as expected because they are larger family houses.
- Buyers are advising developers that the new sites are popular because there has been very little new build development in some parts of the borough for a considerable time.
- Buyers have commented that they were considering moving out of town due to lack of suitable new build options, but are now staying due to the new developments. According to one of the main housebuilders, this pent up demand has resulted in a good level of sales.
- Despite having no formal sales presence on one of the inner urban private sites, the units are already selling well to local buyers – mainly first time buyers.
- The Yew Tree Drive site in North Blackburn, which has not yet started construction, is seeing a great deal of interest from potential purchasers residing outside the borough – people who currently live in the Ribble Valley, South Ribble and Preston, but work in Blackburn. There's also a good level of interest from purchasers from within the Borough.

HIVE

The Hive network has continued to grow with membership now standing at over 385 local businesses and organisations. The network continues to promote the borough as an excellent place to do business, continues to link businesses with educational establishments through the Hive Business School and enables excellent links between the Council and the private sector.

The Hive Steering Group continue to meet monthly and have recently finalised their latest Business Plan. There is also a member engagement survey planned over the next two months to create a clear vision for Hive and

will shape Hive priorities and work programmes over the next 3 years.

FESTIVAL OF MAKING

The 2nd national Festival of Making will be held in Blackburn Town Centre over the weekend of May 12th and 13th 2018.