



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Regeneration Executive Member for Resources
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Director of Growth and Development
<b>DATE:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> March 2018

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Regeneration	Resources
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	Shear Brow	Wensley Fold
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

**SUBJECT:** National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF): project update

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Board is being asked to approve the progression of the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) project for delivery in financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20. The £2.9m project, funded by the Council and the Department for Transport aims to remove vehicular congestion and conflicts, improve movement and access to significant new development sites and deal with congestion and access issues which are currently restricting economic activity and local productivity in the inner urban area around and into Blackburn Town Centre.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

1. Approves the progression of the project
2. Approves the commencement of land and property negotiation relating to the project
3. Notes that further reporting will be made at appropriate stages within the project's progression
4. Notes that funding for the project will be via the Council's Local Transport Plan and DfT direct grant
5. Gives approval to the Director of Growth and Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Regeneration to make amendments to the project.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The Council's NPIF project aims to remove vehicular congestion and conflicts, improve movement and access to significant new development sites and deal with congestion and access issues which are currently restricting economic activity and local productivity in the inner urban area and Town Centre.

The project's vision and objectives are as follows, to:

- Remove congestion to ensure better through flow and a more accessible Town Centre
- Improve access to new and under-used employment sites in the north of the Town Centre
- Support Town Centre vibrancy by expanding the fashion and entrepreneurial activity found at Whalley Range into the Town Centre itself
- Encourage footfall to support businesses by making the streets and pedestrian routes safer, more comfortable and attractive
- Protect the area's unique sense of place and history

- Bring communities and people together to celebrate Blackburn's many strengths and traditions

The NPIF project aims to address the following problems and issues:

- Newly cleared development sites and under-used employment areas are hard to reach
- The existing Orbital Route is of 1980s vintage is dualled and does not serve these sites well
- Disconnection and severance for businesses due to lack of connections, particularly from the Orbital Route into Tontine Street, Sudell Cross and Northgate areas
- No current direct vehicular through route into the Blakey Moor area which contains a number of employment sites
- Vehicular dominated space creates inaccessibility for pedestrians

The Council has previously issued information on the project via:

<http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Pages/Transport-streets-policy-strategy.aspx>

#### 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The NPIF project will tackle congestion and access issues, as well as improving opportunity and integration, and will be delivered in five packages:

**Package 1: Victoria Street (North) / Tontine Street / Barbara Castle Way / Watford Street:** New junctions with new direct access from Barbara Castle Way to serve redevelopment of isolated sites

**Package 2: Richmond Hill / Richmond Terrace:** New highway link road and junction access improvement reconnects Town Centre fringe areas

**Package 3: Sudell Cross / Northgate:** Northgate opened up to through traffic and re-organisation of existing junctions to free up north / south movements into development areas

**Package 4: Ainsworth Street to Richmond Terrace:** New echelon parking at Richmond Terrace and better pedestrian linkages between the Mall and Whalley Range areas

**Package 5: Victoria Street (South):** Becomes inbound only. Promotion of pedestrian movements and to provide additional parking for businesses on Victoria Street.

More footfall and movement into the Town Centre will also support the leisure, cultural and evening economy which is currently under-represented.

Further economic activity will be generated from the investment expected from private sector owners – who will reutilise derelict sites and vacant premises – turning currently remote and isolated business and retail space into a thriving, accessible and well-connected Town Centre hub.

The increase in economic activity and trading in the neighbourhood will be supported by improving legibility of the local network of footpaths and routes. Re-orientation of traffic at Victoria Street allows this key route to be used as a main artery feeding pedestrians into the town centre and the adjoining streets.

A low cost / high impact public realm treatment for key gateways and nodes will redefine the function and use of the historic streets with private businesses encouraged to make better use of external space and squares.

This approach will be used to make Victoria Street a more pedestrian-friendly street lined with independent shops. Small businesses serving the town's legal and financial sector will be encouraged to remain or return to this now popular area.

Recent clearance and demolition in the Town Centre presents an opportunity to reconfigure and improve access, which will unlock further economic development on a number of key Town Centre sites.

For those wanting to access King Georges Hall or the proposed new multi-screen cinema on the

former Waves site, a number of key routes through the Northgate Conservation Area (for vehicles and pedestrians) are proposed, which will make the destination more attractive and easier to get to.

Expected benefits and outcomes of the project include the following:

- Creating economic activity and jobs: Transport interventions will support the unlocking of retail and business growth
- Relieving congestion: Re-organisation of junction arrangements and introduction of new infrastructure removes local traffic conflicts and improves flows
- Improving Local Roads and public transport: Promotes safer, more attractive streets, better air quality and removes barriers to movement for all modes
- Improving access to sixteen Town Centre development sites covering 29,000 square metres, enabling the creation of between 370 and 690 potential new jobs and an uplift in future Rateable Value between £851,000 and £2,091,000
- Existing, vacant and under-utilised sites becoming more marketable with improved access and egress
- Improved pedestrian routes to and from adjacent communities will generate fewer car trips, delivering road safety benefits and improved air quality.

Part of the proposed highway re-alignment requires land that is held on lease from the Council for car parking purposes. The leases are protected by the Landlord & Tenant Act. Discussions will be held with the leaseholders in relation to the provision of alternative parking spaces.

Planning permission will only be required for Package 2 as a new section of highway is proposed to be constructed. All junction improvements are within the curtilage of existing highway and are therefore classified as Permitted Development.

Regular reporting will be required to the majority funder, the Department for Transport, at quarterly intervals within the delivery stage.

A summary of timescales and milestones for the NPIF project are detailed below:

- DfT confirms availability of funding on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017
- Scheme contained within the detailed annual work programme of the Council's Local Transport Plan (8<sup>th</sup> March 2018 Executive Board)
- Consultation with local businesses and the general public: March 2018 onwards
- Detailed design of work packages
- Statutory undertakings review and design (limited in scope – work within existing extent of the highway where possible)
- Gateway review to confirm design proposals
- Planning approval: to be obtained for works package 2 (new Richmond Hill Link Road)
- Procurement: by 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018, project packages to be delivered in house via the Council Highways Department / combination with Developer Framework
- Land elements: Agreement with leaseholders reached
- Construction: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The scheme directly accords with the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 2011 – 2021 Strategic objectives, to:

- Support the economy
- Tackle climate change
- Increase safety and security
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote quality of life, health and the natural environment.

The scheme also contributes to the LTP3's cross cutting priority, to promote the management of the Council's transport assets.

The Council will also shortly be consulting on the Blackburn Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which adds detail, guidance and clarification to the suite of documents comprising the Blackburn with Darwen Development Plan, where it applies to the Town Centre. The SPD also provides a framework to guide development, facilitate positive change and ensure that high quality placemaking is embedded into future development projects within the Centre.

The NPIF project complements and supports the Town Centre SPD aspirations to:

- Link different parts of the Town Centre
- Enable walking, cycling and inclusive access throughout the area
- Respect the heritage of the historic core
- Strengthen local communities

Equality impacts will be addressed within the individual scheme development stage.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Department for Transport confirmed that Ministers gave formal approval to the project on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017 as part of the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF), which aims to ease congestion on important national, regional or local routes to help unlock economic and job opportunities. £244 million of funding for 76 projects nationally has been confirmed by the Government.

The spend profile for the project is as follows:

	DfT funding	Council funding (LTP)	Total
2018/19	£500,000	£450,000	£950,000
2019/20	£1,500,000	£450,000	£1,950,000
Total	£2,000,000	£900,000	£2,900,000

Funding will be paid to the Council as grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. Sign off and audit of expenditure will take place in parallel with the Council's Local Transport Plan reporting on an annual basis. The programme will be closely monitored to ensure full spend and any further variations or amendments will be reported via the Executive Member for Regeneration and Executive Board.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The scheme will be designed and implemented in accordance with relevant highway, transport and traffic legislation; and will need to be procured in accordance with the Council's constitution and; where relevant, European directives; and any grant conditions.

The Council's legal section will be involved in progressing the statutory elements of the project including Traffic Regulation Orders which will commence to co-incide with implementation.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

All professional fees will be met from allocations detailed, and staff time met from existing resources and through established non-core fee protocols using funding as detailed within this report.

The delivery of new infrastructure in the borough will upgrade a significant number of junctions, lengths of highway and highways assets. Maintenance of new lengths of highway infrastructure and associated street furniture i.e. street lighting and landscaping will be funded using existing resources.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

Initial consultations have taken place with the following key stakeholders in relation to the outline NPIF project's proposals:

- Pierce Group (Business Advisory and Accountancy Group)
- Blackburn and Darwen Business Leaders Network (HIVE)
- East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
- Blackburn College
- Blakey Moor Townscape Heritage Project
- Trevor Dawson Commercial Property Consultants
- Capital and Regional (The Mall)

Detailed scheme consultation and information will commence in March 2018 following the approval of this report, seeking views from residents and Town Centre businesses on the proposals via a drop-in Exhibition. The Communications Plan for NPIF plans and associated Blakey Moor Public Realm designs are as follows.

- End February - Designs for Blakey Moor finalised and approved by Heritage Lottery Fund
- Press Release – issued on 8<sup>th</sup> March and embargoed until 9<sup>th</sup> March
- Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018 – launch consultation on NPIF and unveil designs for Blakey Moor Public Realm
- Information on Council website which will describe objectives of the scheme and explain improvements at each key point
- Comments/feedback form established via Survey Monkey platform
- Window exhibition in Restore shop – detailed plans, annotated maps, images and materials
- Restore shop address used for postal comments
- Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018, 1pm – 6pm, Staffed drop-in event at Restore
- Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 10am – 12 noon, Staffed drop-in event at Restore
- Invites issue to all businesses in affected area along with basic information of proposals, maps and contacts for comments
- Time slot allocated to students via Townscape Heritage Partnership
- Events promoted via Council PR, Website and Facebook networks
- Presentation to Blackburn Business Improvement District (BID) Board – March (date tbc)
- Discussion event with Blackburn BID Attract and Support Group (around 20<sup>th</sup> March tbc)
- End March 2018 – Feedback channels closed and information collated

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The

recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

<b>VERSION:</b>	0.01
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Mike Cliffe, Strategic Transport Manager, ext 5310
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<b>DATE:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2018
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	None
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