

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
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This report provides a brief update on progress with key development priorities in this reporting period.

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

South East Blackburn Growth Deal Major Transport Scheme

Construction works have progressed well in relation to the final Local Growth Fund 3 package at South East Blackburn. Significant progress has been made in relation to the installation of significant surface water drainage infrastructure for the new link road at Newfield Drive and Roman Road. A wetland swale will be formed when the drainage attenuation pond is finally landscaped in the new year. The relocation of the 33kVA electric overhead cable which runs from Blackamoor Road to Newfield Drive will be re-laid underground in the new year.

Haslindgen Road widening is progressing, with excavations for widening works allowing for Statutory Undertakers to carry out their works in stages, phased with others and the main construction works. Construction is advancing well at Old Bank Lane which will enable the delivery of the new Royal Blackburn Hospital roundabout entrance, with improved facilities for pedestrians and general traffic alike.

The project package is programmed for completion in Summer 2021 and will see the completion of the Council's Growth Deal 3 "Pennine Gateways" project which included the major infrastructure improvements at Carl Fogarty Way, Brownhill Roundabout, Pleckgate Road, Whalley Old Road and Four Lane Ends.

Blackburn with Darwen Highway Service Improvements

Over the Summer and Autumn period the Highways service surface dressed 10,750m², patched 5,300m² and resurfaced 57,600m² of our network, delivering a significant improvement to the condition of our roads and facilitating enhanced connectivity across the Borough. Further works are also planned for March 2021 to deliver the remainder of the 2020/21 Local Transport Plan capital maintenance and improvement programme.

Although the Autumn period was very wet Highways still undertook gritting treatments on 11 days and used 330 tonnes of salt. Our teams have remained on call 24/7 throughout the Winter period and work closely with volunteer groups, including our 56 winter grit squads.

Blackburn with Darwen School and College Bus Services

The Council has worked proactively with local bus operators to provide additional capacities on the local commercial and subsidised bus network since schools and colleges returned in September 2020.

The busiest routes used for education have been identified and a range of local bus operators have duplicated both open and closed local bus services at peak times. Additional dedicated coaches have also run to Blackburn College which has taken considerable pressure off local commercial services which has enabled greater social distancing and safe travel.

The Council has worked with local school bus operators and parents to introduce a new online voucher based payment system for dedicated school buses which has helped to ensure additional safety through cashless travel.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

A focus of the service has been the delivery of road safety and traffic signals improvement projects with new zebra crossings at Redlam, Blackburn and Blackpool Street, Darwen ensuring safer crossing provision for residents. 72 speed surveys have been recently undertaken to determine vehicle speeds in highlighted areas and three new permanent, interactive speed indication devices are scheduled for introduction by April 2021. A speed cushion refurbishment programme will also roll-out at Bridge Street/George Street, Blackburn Town Centre, and Marsh House Lane, Darwen. Further safety schemes to reduce the speeds of traffic will also be delivered in the early part of 2021 at Pole Lane, Darwen and Lammack Road, Blackburn.

PLACE PRIORITY 6: Strong, Growing Economy to Enable Social Mobility

Darwen Town Deal

The Darwen Town Investment Plan will be submitted to Government by 31 January. The Plan has been developed by the Town Deal Board with support from a team of specialists. Detailed economic analysis, public engagement and project identification and development. The vision, objectives and projects proposed aim to establish Darwen as highly productive and sustainable town of regional importance with a focus on town centre regeneration, new employment housing development and sporting facilities, while improving urban and green gateways linking town to the countryside.

Projects have been shortlisted and prioritised to respond to key challenges and opportunities, and the economic impacts of COVID, as well as maximising the economic benefits with the aim of securing up to £25M in Towns Fund investment for Darwen.

Planning applications have been submitted for the three accelerated Town Deal projects, and have been granted planning permission in January - Darwen AFC and J4 Skatepark expansions alongside the restoration of Darwen Tower (subject to referral to the Secretary of State).

Blakey Moor / Northgate

Tender packages for the construction contract at Blakey Moor Terrace are being finalised with a view to being issued in February. Subject to funding approvals, work could start onsite in March for 12-18 months. The internal reconfiguration of the two units have been slightly revised to better accommodate some structural issues.

Works to restore Council owned 14 and 20 Lord Street West (Prism Gallery and Studios) and privately owned 10-12 Lord Street West (former Mellors Wire Works) started onsite at the beginning of December. Works will see the upper floor at 14-20 Lord Street West brought back into use and the creation of two refurbished retail units at 10-12. Internal works to 35 Northgate (former Ribblesdale Hotel) were put out to tender in December and costs will be reviewed in the New Year.

Growth Programme

The Growth Programme for 2020/21, which was approved at Executive Board in September, is continuing to be implemented as per the updates below.

Housing Developments

Further to the Growth Programme, the following major housing projects involving Council land are progressing through the planning stages:

- McDermott Homes has been selected to purchase the Council land at Ellison Fold Way in Darwen and take forward a detailed planning application for residential development imminently. This will include the adjacent privately-owned land and deliver a combined total of around 320 new family dwellings.
- A new Masterplan for the Holden Fold Development Site (former Darwen Moorland High School Site) was adopted in November 2020. The site could provide up to 430 new homes and associated infrastructure, including highway improvements and a contribution towards extending a local primary school. The Council will continue to work with adjacent landowners in 2021, to progress towards tendering to selecting a developer in late 2021.
- Countryside Homes and Together Housing have submitted a planning application to build around 390 new homes around Fishmoor Drive and Roman Road. The application incorporates two sites on Fishmoor Drive and one on Roman Road, and infrastructure works on Fishmoor Drive.
- An outline planning application is being assessed for up to 165 new homes at Whalley Old Road, a partially Council owned site. A decision on the application could be made at the January Meeting of the Planning & Highways Committee, or subsequent meeting.
- The Council is expecting a planning application for 30 new family homes in early 2021 from McDermott Homes for the Lomond Gardens site in Feniscowles.

Other developments of Council land, at a more advanced stage, include the Griffin Redevelopment site, where Seddon Homes have commenced first phase delivery of 56 new homes. Two sites in Mill Hill are currently under construction by Great Places at Shorrock Lane (former Laneside Care Home) and Bowen Street and both progressing well. Great Places have also commenced on a third site at New Wellington Street. Places for People are making good progress at their development in Alaska Street, in Infirmary waterside, which is planned to complete spring 2021.

Commercial Developments

Good progress is continuing to be made at the Milking Lane development site, which the Council is bringing forward as part of a Joint Venture Company – Barnfield Blackburn Ltd. Construction of the new link road through the site with associated flood prevention infrastructure began in August, and is to be completed in 2021.

At Wainwright Way, the new Home Bargains store opened in October 2020. Work to agree disposal of the remaining plots is on-going, and is expected to be agreed in 2021. Enquiries are continuing to be received regarding the Council's development plots at Carl Fogarty Way. So far, preferred bidders have been selected for Plots 1 and 4, with contracts expected to be exchanged in 2021. Plots 2 and 3 will be made available in 2021.

Construction works are complete regarding Blackburn Cinema. Reel aim to open when Covid restrictions allow.

New Local Plan

Works to prepare an ambitious new Local Plan for the Borough are continuing. Widespread public consultation on a draft Plan is taking place from 8th January until 19th February 2021, with lots of information available on the Council website and exhibitions at Blackburn and Darwen Markets. Everyone is being encouraged to take a look at the details and to leave a comment. Adjustments to the Local Plan timetable and format may be required in 2021, in light of the Government's 2020 White Paper which set out radical changes to the national planning system.

Development Management - Recent Major Developments

In December, two major development proposals were granted planning permission creating a significant number of jobs, thus contributing to the regeneration of the local area and providing significant benefits to the local community. Firstly, the Kay Group were granted consent to develop their Grimshaw Park Service Station for a new Petrol Filling Station and Head Office, providing a striking modern building on an important gateway. Secondly, Oaklands London Property LTD were granted consent to develop the former East Lancashire Coachbuilders site on Whalley New Road, which has been long vacant along an important gateway. The proposal is for commercial units for B1 (Business) and B8 (storage) uses with ancillary trade counters, and a new petrol service station complex on Whalley New Road. As well as a petrol station/store, the site will feature a restaurant, coffee shop, workshops, and storage and trade counter units.