

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
DATE: 25 MARCH 2021**

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

South East Blackburn Growth Deal Major Transport Scheme

New Link Road. Works are progressing well with the contractor installing drainage along the new link road with construction of footways also underway. Works are also well on with the connection into Blackamoor Road and completion/opening is targeted for May 2021.

Haslingden Road – There is lots of activity on this section including surfacing, drainage works and the diverting of underground services. The contractor remains on programme with planned completion to be in Summer 2021. This is the final project to be completed from the Growth Deal 3 'Pennine Gateways' funding which also included the major infrastructure improvements at Carl Fogarty Way, Brownhill Roundabout, Pleckgate Road, Whalley Old Road and Four Lane Ends.

Local Transport Plan 4

We are currently developing the LTP4 with LCC and Blackpool Council. The timetable for delivery and identified objectives will be agreed with local partners shortly and will be presented to members in due course.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)

The Council are part of a steering group with Lancashire County Council (LCC), Hyndburn and Rossendale Councils to develop an East Lancashire LCWIP. These frameworks will be completed later this year to inform national funding bids in 2022.

LCWIPs are a new, strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks, ideally over a 10-year period, and form a vital part of the national strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle. The Department for Transport (DfT) have indicated that authorities with LCWIPs will be eligible for future capital funding.

Winter Maintenance

We experienced a prolonged period of severe winter weather in January and February and had several weeks of continuous gritting to reduce the risk from snow and ice on our network. Throughout this period, grit bins were checked and refilled. We have also replenished stocks of salt for our winter grit squads.

This period also saw the completion of two new weather stations that have been constructed at Yew Tree Drive, Blackburn and Bull Hill, Darwen. The new stations are powered by both wind and solar and will provide a more accurate weather forecast resulting in more efficient decision making for our winter maintenance leads.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Road Safety

Highways continue to deploy the five mobile speed indication devices across the network to monitor vehicle movements and speeds on our roads. We do this at targeted locations and at locations where we have received complaints of speeding. They remain on site for 7-days and the data collected is stored in our asset management system and used to determine if intervention is required, for example traffic calming, enabling a programme of road safety schemes to be developed.

Working with ward Councillors the Highways team developed a road safety scheme for Pole Lane, Darwen, and the approved traffic calming measures will be installed in April. Resulting from a speed survey, which recorded speeds well in excess of the limit, the scheme will provide chicanes to slow down traffic down, enabling a safer environment for our residents.

PLACE PRIORITY 6: STRONG, GROWING ECONOMY TO ENABLE SOCIAL MOBILITY

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. The Growth Programme for 2021/22 will be presented to Executive Board in April for approval.

Housing Developments

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

- McDermott Homes were selected to purchase the Council land at Ellison Fold Way in Darwen and take forward a detailed planning application for residential development, which was received in February and is now under assessment. The application includes the adjacent privately-owned land and will deliver a combined total of around 340 new family dwellings including 70 affordable houses.
- Bids have been received in response to the final stage of procurement for the Haslingden Road Key Worker Housing Site, which will provide around 300 new homes close to Royal Blackburn Hospital, including a proportion of homes for NHS key workers. A preferred bidder will be selected by the summer, and a planning application is expected later this year.

- Countryside Homes and Together Housing have now received planning permission to build around 390 new homes of mixed tenure 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. Construction will commence later this year.
- Outline planning permission has been granted for up to 165 new homes at Whalley Old Road, a partially Council-owned site. The Council are working with adjacent landowners with site investigations to commence early summer to investigate the ground conditions. The landowners will commence with marketing the site later in the year.
- The Council is expecting a planning application for 30 new family homes in the spring from McDermott Homes for the Lomond Gardens site in Feniscowles.
- Land offers have been received for the residential development parcels at Milking Lane, Lower Darwen, which the Council owns as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture. The preferred bidder will be selected this month, and a detailed 'reserved matters' planning application is expected later this year.

Other developments of Council land, at a more advanced stage, include the Griffin Redevelopment site, where Seddon Homes are building 56 new homes for Great Places in the first phase of development. Three sites in Mill Hill are currently under construction by Great Places at Shorrocks Lane (former Laneside Care Home), Bowen Street and New Wellington Street. Applethwaite Homes are progressing well with new family homes under construction at Tower Road, and Places for People are in the final stages of their development in Alaska Street, Infirmary Waterside, which is almost complete. This includes the first adaptive homes built in the borough.

Commercial Developments

Legals are progressing for the Council's purchase of the former Thwaites Brewery site, as part of a Joint Venture with Maple Grove. Further updates regarding site proposals will be reported as the project moves forward.

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

Work to agree disposal of the remaining Wainwright Way plots is on-going, and is expected to be agreed this year. For Plot 1, the Council's developer partner has secured an end-user with contracts to be instructed later this month, subject to Council approval.

At Carl Fogarty Way, preferred bidders have been selected for Plots 1 and 4, with legals progressing and contracts expected to be exchanged by the summer. Plots 2 and 3 will also be made available this year.

Land at Partnership Way in Shadsworth Business Park has recently been disposed to GAP Plastics, the adjacent landowner, to allow their continued business expansion.

The new Blackburn Cinema and undercroft carpark is complete. Reel aim to open the cinema when Covid restrictions allow with the carpark opening in March.

New Local Plan

Works to prepare an ambitious new Local Plan for the Borough are continuing. Widespread public consultation on a draft Plan took place from 8th January until 19th February, using a wide variety of media due to COVID restrictions. The team received responses from over 950 individuals and organisations - more than ever before for a Local Plan consultation.

The responses are being reviewed over the next few months and will be reported at a future Executive Board meeting. Another consultation will take place later this year before submitting the Plan to Government for examination.

Darwen Town Deal

The Darwen Town Investment Plan was submitted to Government at the end of January which – topped up with private and council investment – could be worth more than £100m.

The Plan was developed by the Town Deal Board with support from the Council and a team of specialists. 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.

Proposals include restoring the town's Victorian market – creating a new food hall and 'makers market' to attract visitors, funding for the Library and Library Theatre and improved car parking. Key corridors and gateways will also benefit from new investment to improve the look-and-feel of the town from both the north and south as well as funding to improve pathways and trails linking the town centre, local parks and the moors.

A new manufacturing opportunity has also been developed which would put Darwen on the map nationally, complemented by a new national innovation centre. New employment sites will generate new jobs alongside investment to unlock both new and stalled housing developments, the East Lancashire Sports Village development, and the extension of ultrafast broadband.

The Board is awaiting feedback from the Government and the timing of their decision as to Darwen's funding allocation is still uncertain but it is hoped we will hear very shortly.

Further to recent Government announcements work is underway to develop a £20M Levelling Up Fund submission for Blackburn. Further updates on this proposal and a complementary strategic transport bid will be provided to members in due course.

Townscape Heritage Project - Blakey Moor/Northgate/Lord Street West

Tender package for the construction contract at Blakey Moor Terrace is awaiting final approval from the NLHF before being issued. Once tendered, works will start as soon as possible and be on site for 12-18 months.

Works to neighbouring 29 Blakey Moor (Jubilee Pub) have started and subject to NLHF approval. The private owner plans to open a new café/restaurant early summer. Works to restore Council owned 14 and 20 Lord Street West are almost complete and will be re-occupied by Prism Studios, Prism Gallery and Super Slow Way in the next few months. Good progress is being made to bring two privately owned shops back into use at 10-12 Lord Street West and works are due to complete end of April.