

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Growth and Development

LEAD OFFICERS: Strategic Director of Place

DATE: Thursday, 8 April 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Growth and Development

WARD/S AFFECTED:

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT:

Growth Programme 2021/22

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has an economic Growth Programme to support the creation of jobs, housing and infrastructure within the Borough, delivering on the strategy set out in the adopted Local Plan. The Council's strategy, including the Growth Programme, has helped to deliver strategic growth since 2015 by securing the delivery of new homes and jobs in the Borough.

To deliver this Growth Programme the Council continues to identify and manage a pipeline of projects which currently comprises a working total of over 200 sites across the Borough with projects planned to be implemented over the short, medium and long term. These projects utilise a combination of private or public sector land and cover employment, housing and town centre developments.

Delivery of these private and public sector projects will generate many benefits to the Borough, including:-

- Additional Council and Business tax revenues to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- Accelerating economic activity to create employment opportunities for residents;
- Supporting growth and vitality in the town centres of Blackburn and Darwen;
- Removing localised blight by bringing empty homes or properties back into use;
- Generating financial benefits from strategic land receipts;
- Securing developer funding for essential infrastructure including roads, open spaces and schools; and
- Extending the choice and range of new family housing to attract and retain residents.

This report provides a summary of progress to date and outlines the programme of projects for 2021/22.

This report also requests delegated authority to vary the Growth Programme for 2021/22 by adding or removing sites as required, reflecting emerging priorities.

The report also seeks approval to grant a two-year extension to the successful Growth Framework.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Notes the good progress made by the Growth Team during 2020-21 through challenging operational conditions;
- Approves the Growth Programme to progress from feasibility stage through to tender stage during 2021-22;
- Delegate's authority to revise the Growth Programme for 2021/22, attached as Annexe A (by adding, removing or prioritising sites) to the Growth Programme Director in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth & Development; and
- Approves a 2-year extension to the Growth Framework to March 2024 and reappoint the following five partners to the Framework, [in alphabetical order]: Barnfield Construction Ltd, Eric Wright Group Ltd, I&H Brown Ltd, Seddon Construction and The Casey Group Ltd.

3. BACKGROUND

In order to deliver the Growth Programme the Council continually invests in a Growth Team, which promotes Council owned sites for development, works with the private sector to develop new homes by bringing forward private sector sites and works with Registered Providers to develop much needed Affordable Homes for rent. The team also maintains a pipeline of sites by ensuring an up-to-date Local Plan is produced, and pro-actively brings empty homes and other properties back into use. The Growth Team is led by a senior Council officer who is supported by a small multi-disciplined team of officers.

The Growth Team also leads on all strategic planning functions, on the initial engagement with potential investors and on the Section 106 process to secure developer funding for investment in local infrastructure.

A range of initiatives have been developed to support in delivering the Growth Programme, which include;

- A programme and pipeline dashboard with key programmes of work covering 200 projects across employment, housing, infrastructure, empty homes and town centres;
- Creation of Joint Venture partnerships to secure the future of challenging sites, such as the former Lower Darwen Paper Mill site and former Thwaites Brewery site.
- Using a Growth Framework for selection of local contractors for delivering a variety of projects covering construction, civil engineering and developments;
- Implementation of robust section 106 procedures to test developer's viability appraisals. This will ensure the Council receives the correct amount of funding to support infrastructure such as education, affordable homes, green infrastructure and highways;
- A programme for disposing key strategic housing sites and employment land;
- Applying for public sector grants through preparing business cases and funding bids; and
- Developing key infrastructure to support the delivery of Growth in the Borough, including education and highway schemes.

To assist the delivery of the Growth Programme the Council procured a framework of partners to bring forward Council owned sites for commercial development, in addition to construction and civil

engineering works for capital projects. To date over £20m of capital value has been delivered by the framework and 11 projects completed to date. The framework partners [in alphabetical order] are: Barnfield Construction Ltd, Eric Wright Group Ltd, I&H Brown Ltd, Seddon Construction and The Casey Group Ltd. The framework commenced in January 2018 and is due to expire in January 2022 with the option to trigger an additional two-year extension. As well as the successful delivery of projects, the framework has also delivered a number of apprenticeships.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The progress of the Growth Programme to date is detailed below with updates on key sites and overall planned delivery numbers.

- The **key programmes** are divided into two programme themes; Place and Thematic across employment, housing and town centres' sectors. These include:

Place

- Blackburn Town Centre Developments
- Darwen Town Centre Developments (now within the Darwen Town Fund Programme)
- Darwen East Development Corridor
- North Blackburn Development Corridor
- South East Blackburn Growth Zone
- Carl Fogarty Way Commercial Units
- Wainwright Way Commercial Units
- West Blackburn Development Corridor

Thematic

- Affordable Housing
 - Empty Homes (including proposals for a new Local Housing Company)
 - Infill Commercial Sites
 - Infill Housing Sites
- Estimated **housing completions for 2020/21 is expected to be circa 350**, with 292 having been completed in the first three quarters of the year (1st April 2020 – 31st December 2020).
 - **Key Housing schemes on site which will yield 1,950 units upon completion.**
 - 1) Lammack Road, Blackburn – 50 units being promoted by Miller Homes
 - 2) Gib Lane, Blackburn – 560 dwellings being promoted by Kingswood Homes and Story Homes
 - 3) Albion Mill, Blackburn – 105 extra care and dementia homes being promoted by Verum Victum
 - 4) Whinney Lane, Blackburn - 270 dwellings being promoted by Wainhomes
 - 5) Cranberry Lane, Darwen - 135 dwellings being promoted by McDermott Homes
 - 6) Pole Lane, Darwen – 260 dwellings being promoted by Kier Living and Persimmon Homes
 - 7) Roe Lee, Blackburn – 156 dwellings being promoted by Persimmon Homes and 33 by Miller Homes
 - 8) Tower View, Darwen – 17 dwellings being promoted by Hearle Homes
 - 9) Tower Road, Fenisccliffe – 30 dwellings being promoted by Applethwaite Homes
 - 10) Alaska Street, Blackburn – 73 affordable homes being promoted by Places for People
 - 11) Griffin (Phase 1), Blackburn – 56 affordable homes being promoted by Seddon and Great Places
 - 12) Former SAPPI site (phase 1a) – enabling works on site for the initial phase of 96 dwellings
 - 13) School Lane – 45 dwellings being promoted by Wainhomes

- 14) Former Beechwood Garden Centre – 14 dwellings promoted by Silverchic Developments.
- 15) Land off New Wellington St – 42 affordable homes promoted by Great Places.
- 16) Bowen St, Blackburn – 24 affordable homes promoted by Great Places.
- 17) Former Laneside Care Home, Blackburn – 16 affordable homes promoted by Great Places.

- **Key Employment schemes recently completed or on site include:**

- 1) Euro Garages Head Office, Haslingden Road
- 2) Home Bargains store at Wainwright Way, Blackburn Town Centre
- 3) Former Waves Site - new cinema, under-croft car park and leisure use development
- 4) Lidl store at Furthergate, Blackburn
- 5) Former Newmans site, Garden Street
- 6) Units at Bruce St / Gladstone St, Blackburn
- 7) Units at Commercial Road, Darwen
- 8) Units at Canterbury St, Blackburn
- 9) Site preparation (road and flood infrastructure) at Millbank Business Park (former Lower Darwen Paper Mill).

- **Council owned key housing and commercial development sites coming forward in the next 12 to 24 months.**

- 1) Millbank Business Park / Milking Lane – commercial and residential development plots promoted by Barnfield Blackburn Ltd
- 2) Carl Fogarty Way, Blackburn – Plots 1 and 4.
- 3) Dock Street, Blackburn – new commercial units being promoted by Barnfield Construction Ltd
- 4) Whitebirk Industrial Estate - Pets Choice Phase 2 manufacturing facility
- 5) Wainwright Way (Phase 2), Maple Grove assessing schemes for remaining 2 plots (Plots 1 and 3)
- 6) Salisbury Road, Darwen – Hearle Homes appointed to develop 12 new dwellings
- 7) Fishmoor Drive, Blackburn – major housing development of 383 dwellings being promoted by Together Housing and Countryside with a mix of affordable and private dwellings
- 8) Haslingden Road – new housing development offering a mix of 150 family homes and up to 150 key worker apartments to support employees of the East Lancs Health Trust
- 9) Lomond Gardens, Feniscowles – McDermott Homes appointed to bring forward a housing scheme for 30 new dwellings
- 10) Ellison Fold Way, Darwen – 343 new dwellings, including 67 affordable homes, being promoted following the opening of Ellison Fold Way link road (mixture of Council and privately-owned land).
- 11) Former Thwaites and markets site, Blackburn – Council moving forward with plans for comprehensive redevelopment once Maple Grove Blackburn Ltd (the new Joint Venture Company) has been established and the site is being acquired.
- 12) Chapels Park South – new commercial plots to be promoted by Barnfield Blackburn Ltd
- 13) Blakey Moor Building / King George's Hall – redevelopment of the Blakey Moor Building (being promoted by Barnfield Blackburn Ltd) and the links with King George's Hall and the Blakey Moor Terrace Scheme.

Trading Risk

It should be acknowledged that the procurement and delivery stages for many of the housing, employment and strategic sites noted above have experienced some delay due to COVID-19. The scale of current and anticipated impacts of the pandemic and the related economic downturn on investor confidence, and, in turn, possible implications for our current delivery programme could be significant.

Furthermore, there may be additional impacts as a result of Brexit. Despite this, the Borough remains committed to maintaining Growth momentum, with encouraging signs from continued local developer presence and interest. The delivery programme will be continuously updated as the situation evolves, ensuring Growth Programme resources are always directed towards maximising development outcomes for the Borough.

Whilst the details are not yet fully known, it should also be noted that national economic recovery and levelling up plans are expected. The Council will be supporting the development of strategic project proposals to come forward for the new £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund. In addition, the Council will continue to develop new propositions for other national funding streams including the Shared Prosperity Fund and various Homes England strategic funds. This may enable the Council and its partners to bring forward strategic development opportunities and other stalled sites more quickly.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Blackburn with Darwen's Corporate Plan has a priority to accelerate the growth agenda, creating good quality jobs for the local population, providing necessary infrastructure and securing positive outcomes from capital investments. There is also a commitment to deliver the growth plan priorities for employment, town centres and housing.

The identified Growth Programme also supports delivery of the strategy and policies set out within the Council's adopted Local Plan, comprising the Core Strategy and the Local Plan Part 2. It ensures that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in terms of providing sufficient new homes and jobs for residents, maintaining a deliverable 5 Year Supply of housing sites and passing the Government's annual Housing Delivery Test.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Whilst there may be financial implications for individual projects, which are reported separately, there are no financial implications for this progress update report however the Council may need to consider additional revenue to support project development costs and will be dependent on the funding opportunity presented.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Whilst there may be legal implications for individual projects, which are reported separately, there are no legal implications for this progress update report.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Whilst there may be resource implications for individual projects, which are reported separately, there are no resource implications for this progress update report.

The Growth Team is working at full capacity, and therefore opportunities to fast-track business casework to support public investment submissions, which may be subject to national competition, may require additional resourcing to enable the Council to access new growth funds. Such opportunities would be the subject of separate reports in due course.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

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.

10. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations undertaken for each scheme in accordance with the Council's constitution, the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and other statutory planning legislation.

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.

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DATE:	April 2021
BACKGROUND PAPER:	None