

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
DATE: 24th March 2022**

ALL PRIORITIES:

New Local Plan to 2037

The final draft of the new Local Plan was published for a 6-week public consultation on 4th February 2022, ending on 18th March. The ambitious Plan proposes the creation of around 7,000 new homes and 5,000 net new jobs by 2037 at identified development sites.

It also aims to help drive the Borough's Covid-19 recovery by supporting housing and employment growth, and improved social and physical infrastructure as well as ways to combat climate change in all planning decisions.

Following the consultation, the responses will be reviewed and submitted to Government for examination, subject to Council Forum approval. The Government requires Local Plans to be adopted by the end of 2023.

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Local Transport Plan – Annual Improvements Programme

Following confirmation on 28th February of our funding allocations for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25, with the 2022/23 improvement programme considered at the March meeting of the Executive Board. The funding has remained at 2021/22 levels with a balanced improvement programme across all our assets.

Cycling and Walking

In December, the Council was notified that we had been successful with our request to be considered as part of an Active Travel Social Prescribing feasibility study. Our transport team are working in conjunction with Public Health colleagues to develop a bid and the study will provide funding to enable the Council to work with in collaboration with NHS colleagues to develop project plans that will:

- Actively promote increased levels of physical activity through cycling and walking
- Demonstrate clear links between infrastructure development and the proposed social prescribing schemes
- Support a modal shift to active travel providing people with travel choices and supporting changes in behaviour

Our bid will be submitted in April and if successful funding will be provided over the next 3 years.

Enhanced Bus Partnership

In October, the Council published its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which was created in conjunction with Lancashire County Council and our private operators. The BSIP analyses current service levels and includes targets to:

- improve bus journey time and reliability; and
- increase passenger numbers and customer satisfaction.

We have completed all statutory consultation and due to the delay in the Department for Transport (DfT) announcing funding allocations the decision to enter into an Enhanced Partnership with our private operators in April 2022, will be delayed until consideration by the Executive Board in April.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Safer Roads Operational Group and Strategy

The new Safer Roads Strategy was approved at February Executive Board and aims to encourage safer but also healthier roads. The primary aim of this strategy is to reduce casualties on the Borough's roads and its secondary aims are to:

- Make people feel safer on BwD roads, including when walking and cycling;
- Reduce car use and increase in walking and cycling; and
- Take action to improve air quality.

We have established an operational multi-agency group to work within the strategic framework of engagement, education, enforcement, and engineering and developed a comprehensive 5-year action plan.

In addition the Council works in partnership with strategic partners across the Lancashire sub-region as part of the Lancashire Roads Safety Partnership. This group is in a transitional period with the strategy and terms of reference being reviewed. The partnership has a crucial role in enforcement, education and engaging over road safety and having our own strategy linked to the aims of this partnership will be beneficial.

Climate Emergency Action Plan

The Council's Executive Board approved the latest update to the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) in December 2021. As agreed, a Climate Change Working Group has been formed to provide oversight of the delivery of actions set out in the CEAP. The Working Group includes representatives from across all Council service areas and is co-chaired at the Director level. The working group will focus, prioritise and track the impact of key CEAP actions. An annual report on the delivery of CEAP priorities will be presented to members.

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

Darwen Town Deal

Work is well underway on the development of the detailed business cases for the 9 approved projects in the £25 million Darwen Town Deal allocation to help deliver the Town Investment Plan. These businesses cases will be submitted to Government by early August after approval by the Town Deal Board and Council, as accountable body. A Communication and Marketing strategy is being developed with the Board and there will be regular updates on progress as well as further information on the direction of the development of the projects. All funding will be allocated in line with Government requirements and our programme management and assurance frameworks. The Council, as the accountable body, will be responsible for the delivery of the programme over the 4-year funding period including the current pre-development phase working to the Town Deal Board. A more detailed report on the Darwen Deal programme was presented to March Executive Board.

Housing Developments

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

- Keepmoat and Progress Housing have submitted a detailed planning application to develop the Council's 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.
- Following outline planning permission being granted in 2021 for up to 165 new homes at Whalley Old Road, a partially Council-owned site, an informal tender process has been carried out and a preferred developer will be recommended to the Executive Board meeting in April to take the site forward via a detailed planning application later this year.
- Tenders for the development of the Holden Fold residential development site in Darwen (former Moorland School site), which is partly Council-owned, are to be invited during Spring 2022.

Other developments on current or former Council land, at a more advanced stage, include the Roe Lee site, where Persimmon Homes are established on site; the Griffin Redevelopment site, where Seddon Homes are building 56 new homes for Great Places, the Mill Hill sites where Great Places are developing, land at Lomond Gardens for McDermott Homes, and Countryside Homes and Together Housing have now commenced their development of 390 new homes of mixed tenure around Fishmoor Drive / Roman Road.

Elan Homes will soon be commencing their residential development at Milking Lane, Lower Darwen, which the Council owns as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture.

In Darwen, McDermott Homes have commenced their development at Ellison Fold Way in Darwen which will deliver a combined total of around 340 new family

dwellings including 70 affordable houses plus contributions towards more school places, roads and improving the Blacksnape Play Area.

Commercial Developments

Good progress is continuing to be made at the Milking Lane development site, which the Council is bringing forward as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Joint Venture Company. The new link road through the site opened in 2021 and construction of the commercial development plots commenced this month.

At Carl Fogarty Way, preferred bidders have been selected for Plots 1, 4 and 6. Planning permission was granted for the commercial development of Plot 1 in February, and planning applications are now under assessment for commercial developments at Plots 4 and 6. Plot 3 is to be released for tender soon.

PLACE, PRIORITY 7: SUPPORTING OUR TOWN CENTRES AND BUSINESSES

The Council / Maple Grove Joint Venture company is continuing to progress with ambitious masterplanning work for the former Thwaites Brewery site and surrounds in Blackburn Town Centre, with details published as part of the current Local Plan public consultation. Demolition of a vacant building adjacent to The Fleece Public House commenced in February, in preparation for future renovation and re-opening of The Fleece.

Specialist architects, OMI, were appointed in February to commence the St John's Church refurbishment and repurposing project in Blackburn Town Centre, aimed at creating high quality flexible workspace to meet new agile working trends post pandemic. A planning application for the works is anticipated in late 2022, with contractor procurement commencing early 2023.

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

As a precautionary measure, prior to recent and exceptionally strong winds and storms, the pavement and road was temporarily closed to the front of Blakey Moor Terrace. A package of temporary works advised by our structural engineer and Building Control is being undertaken to ensure the safety of the building. Pedestrian access has been maintained to King George's Hall and the road closure will be lifted as soon as possible.

These works will not affect the programmed restoration and redevelopment of the terrace that will be onsite for the next 12 months.

Phase II internal refurbishment of 35 Northgate (former Ribblesdale Hotel) are currently onsite, with a new bar and restaurant operator hopeful of being ready to open by June.

Shop front restoration schemes for properties at 13 Northgate (former Age Concern) 34 (Baileys Jewellers) and 36-40 (Wellcome pound shop) Northgate have been tendered and we hope to award grant funding in the next few months.