



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Finance and Governance Executive Member for Growth and Development
LEAD OFFICERS:	Director of Growth & Development
DATE:	April 2022

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Growth & Development
WARD/S AFFECTED:	All
KEY DECISION:	YES

SUBJECT: Growth Programme 2022/23

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has an **on-going economic Growth Programme** to support the creation of jobs, housing and infrastructure within the Borough and 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 the current Local Plan was adopted in 2015**, by securing the delivery of new homes, jobs and infrastructure in the Borough. In the 5 years leading up to the pandemic, the Borough's growth trajectory improved significantly **with an additional 5,000 new jobs in the Borough**, including 2,000 manufacturing jobs.

To deliver the Growth Programme the Council continues to identify and manage a pipeline of projects which are planned to be implemented over the short, medium and longer term. These projects are delivered using a combination of private or public sector land and cover employment, housing and town centre developments in Blackburn and Darwen.

The Growth Programme is also focused on maximising public investment opportunities from new national programmes, including the Government's Levelling Up and UK Shared Prosperity Funds and Homes England's new housing delivery initiatives and officers are in continuous dialogue with Homes England and other government agencies and departments.

The Council's Growth & Development Team is progressing with a new Local Plan. Once adopted, the new Local Plan, will introduce **'a balanced growth strategy'**, ensuring the project pipeline is developed along with supporting infrastructure and environmental improvements. This will further support the latest update to the **Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP)** which was approved by Executive Board in December 2021 and includes projects aimed at progressing towards the achievement of being a carbon neutral Council by 2030.

Delivery of the Growth Programme will **generate many benefits** for the Borough, including:-

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

This report provides a summary of progress on growth projects to date and outlines the **Growth Programme for 2022/23**, which is attached as Annex A.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

1. Notes the continued good progress made by the Growth & Development Team during 2021-22;
2. Notes the good progress made by Barnfield Blackburn Ltd and Maple Grove Blackburn Ltd – the Council's two joint venture development companies with Barnfield and Eric Wright respectively;
3. Approves the Growth Programme for 2022-23 for officers to progress projects from feasibility stage through to procurement and tender stage as required by project timelines and delivery;
4. Subject to compliance with Financial and Contract Procedure Rules, delegates authority to revise the Growth Programme for 2022/23 (by adding, removing or prioritising sites) to the Growth Director in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth & Development and Executive Member for Finance and Governance; and
5. Delegates authority to the Growth Director to proceed to procurement for partners to support in the development of a business case for a new Local Housing Company.

3. BACKGROUND

In order to deliver the Growth Programme the Council continually invests in a Growth & Development Team, which together promote Council-owned sites for development, work with the private sector to develop new housing and employment schemes and work with Registered Providers to develop much needed affordable homes for rent or shared ownership.

The Team also maintains a pipeline of sites by ensuring an up-to-date Local Plan is produced, manage the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, assess planning and building control applications, secure developer funding towards infrastructure, planning and delivery of strategic transport schemes, manage the Council's land and property holdings, and pro-actively bring empty homes and other properties back into use.

Our **growth success to date** can be evidenced with reference to some recent statistics, such as:

- Latest Housing Delivery Test results, announced in Jan 2022, **place Blackburn with Darwen in the top 10% of English local authorities**, whereas in 2018 the Borough was listed in the bottom 20%;
- Estimated housing completions for 2021/22 is expected to be circa 450, with 417 having been completed during the first 11 months of the monitoring year up to the end of February 2022;
- Since 2015/16 there have been over 1,700 new homes built across the Borough, **with around 400 of those new homes being affordable**, which is above our 20% target;
- **Over 65% of the 1,700 new homes have been constructed on brownfield land;**
- The draft new Local Plan identifies a pipeline of circa 7,000 homes over the next 15 years, **with around 50% of the homes already benefiting from planning permission;**
- The number of annual empty properties brought back into use across the Borough has increased from 167 in 2016/17 to 653 in 2020/21;
- The number of long-term empty properties (over 6 months) **is now below 1,000 for the first time since 2004**, which is approximately 1.5% of housing stock, **representing a reduction of 0.5% since 2015;**
- The Council was successful in securing a derelict property at Cobden Street, Darwen, which was acquired by a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). The Public Inquiry for this CPO was the first conducted online for the Council due to restrictions brought in by the pandemic.
- During 2021/22, 6 long term empty properties were approved for Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). From those 6 properties; 2 were successfully CPO'd, 2 were bought by agreement and the remaining 2 are being fully refurbished for occupation by their owners.

Programme Successes

The **programme success are due to a range of initiatives** and enhanced services which have been implemented to support and accelerate delivery and include:

- Creation of our first joint venture partnership with Barnfield, incorporated as Barnfield Blackburn Ltd, which acquired the former Lower Darwen Paper Mill site in 2018. Work has progressed since 2018 with the construction of a new link road, Millbank Road, which opened during the summer of 2021. Construction of industrial units at Plots 1,2 and 3 commenced in 2022 with plot 4 to follow. Elan homes has secured the two residential plots from Barnfield Blackburn Ltd and are due to commence on site summer 2022. The Council is pleased to see its first joint venture development performing so well, especially given the significant sites challenges delivering much needed new employment space for our business community.
- Creation of our second joint venture partnership with Maple Grove (part of the Eric Wright Group) and incorporated as Maple Grove Blackburn Ltd. The joint venture acquired the former Thwaites brewery site in 2021 and has since been supporting the Council developing plans for a new masterplan for Blackburn Town Centre.
- Extending our Growth Framework (additional 2 years to 2024) to use for delivering variety of projects covering construction, civil engineering and developments;
- Implementation of robust monitoring of the Council's section 106 procedures to test developer's viability appraisals to 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 sites for housing and employment uses;
- 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.

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

Key Housing schemes on site or completed in 2021/22:

- 1) Lammack Road, Blackburn – 50 dwellings being promoted by Miller Homes

- 2) Gib Lane, Blackburn – 800 dwellings being promoted by Kingswood Homes and Story Homes
- 3) Albion Mill, Blackburn –105 extra care and dementia homes by Verum Victum
- 4) Whinney Lane / Yew Tree Drive, 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
- 8) Tower View, Darwen – 17 dwellings being promoted by Hearle Homes
- 9) Tower Road, Fenisccliffe – 30 dwellings by Applethwaite Homes
- 10) Alaska Street, Blackburn – 73 affordable homes, including adapted homes, 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) – 450 dwellings being promoted by Blackburn Waterside
- 13) School Lane – 45 dwellings being promoted by Wainhomes
- 14) Former Beechwood Garden Centre – 14 dwellings 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.
- 18) Ellison Fold Way – 343 dwellings being promoted by McDermott Homes, including 67 affordable homes.
- 19) Lomond Gardens – 30 dwellings being promoted by McDermott Homes.
- 20) Ramsgreave Drive – 110 dwellings being promoted by Applethwaite Homes and McDermott Homes.
- 21) Fishmoor Drive – 383 dwellings being promoted by Countryside and Together Housing.

- **Key Employment schemes on site or completed in 2021/22:**

- 1) Former Newmans site, Garden Street
- 2) Units at Bruce St / Gladstone St, Blackburn
- 3) Units at Commercial Road, Darwen
- 4) Units at Canterbury St, Blackburn
- 5) Units at Millbank Business Park (former Lower Darwen Paper Mill)
- 6) Units at Plot 1, Wainwright Way, Blackburn
- 7) Units at Plot 1,4 and 6 at Carl Fogarty Way, Blackburn

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

- 1) Millbank Business Park / Milking Lane – commercial plots promoted by Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture Company and residential plots promoted by Elan Homes
- 2) Carl Fogarty Way, Blackburn – Plots 3 (Plot 2 on hold)
- 3) Whalley Old Road – new housing development for up to 135 homes
- 4) Dock Street, Blackburn – new commercial units being promoted by Barnfield Construction
- 5) Holden Fold, Darwen – new housing development for circa 445 homes
- 6) Whitebirk Industrial Estate - Pets Choice Phase 2 manufacturing facility
- 7) Wainwright Way (Phase 2) – Plots 3
- 8) Salisbury Road, Darwen – Hearle Homes appointed to develop 12 new dwellings
- 9) Issa Way – over 250,000 sqft of new commercial units
- 10) Haslingden Road – new housing development offering a mix of 150 family homes and 150 key worker and affordable apartments
- 11) Former Thwaites and markets site, Blackburn – Council moving forward with plans for comprehensive redevelopment as part of the Maple Grove Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture Company
- 12) Comprehensive restoration of St John’s Church to create new workspace and innovation hub
- 13) Refurbishment of the Fleece Pub, Blackburn
- 14) Restoration and re-purposing of the former Griffin Lodge to create modern health facilities
- 15) Chapels Park South – new commercial site being promoted by Barnfield Blackburn Ltd and Perspex as part of the Darwen Town Deal programme.

Market Risk

It should be acknowledged that the procurement and delivery stages for many of the housing, employment and strategic sites noted above continue to experience delay following the pandemic, the impacts of Brexit and increasing construction and development inflation cost increases. Despite this, the Borough remains committed to maintaining our growth momentum, with very encouraging signs from continued local developer presence and interest together with new high quality entrants to the market.

The delivery programme will be continuously updated, ensuring Growth Programme resources are always directed towards maximising outcomes for the Borough.

It should also be noted that levelling up plans may provide an opportunity for the Council and its partners to seek funding towards strategic development opportunities and other stalled sites.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Blackburn with Darwen's Corporate Plan has a priority to accelerate the growth agenda, creating good quality jobs and homes 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, infrastructure and the environment.

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.

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 & Development Team is working at 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. 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. (*insert EIA link here*)

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

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.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	PMO Growth
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DATE:	March 2022
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	None
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