

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY

DATE: 6th October 2022

ALL PRIORITIES:

New Local Plan to 2037

The ambitious new Local Plan for the Borough (2021-2037) proposes the creation of around 7,000 new homes and 5,000 net new jobs to 2037 through a number of committed and proposed new development sites. It also aims to help drive the Borough's Covid-19 recovery by supporting housing and employment growth, improvements to social and physical infrastructure, and helping to combat climate change in all future planning decisions. The Plan was formally submitted to the Secretary of State on Friday 5th August 2022 for independent examination.

The Planning Inspectorate has also now appointed two Planning Inspectors to conduct the Examination in Public (EiP) process. A Programme Officer has also been appointed to act as the first point of contact for all administrative matters regarding the EiP, and act as a liaison between representors and the inspectors. The appointed inspectors will now review all the Local Plan submission documents. Following a full review they are expected to raise a series of Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) with the Council. The Planning Inspectors have indicated that they expect to publish MIQs in late October/early November, and that public hearings will take place in early 2023. Any updates, and all documents relating to the EiP process will be published on the Council's Local Plan webpage at www.blackburn.gov.uk/localplan.

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Levelling Up Fund 2 – Blackburn Growth Axis Transport Package (South East)

A bid for £20m has been submitted to round 2 of the Government's Levelling Up Fund to help bring forward improvements to Junction 5 of the M65, and to deliver a comprehensive, high-quality walking and cycling network in south east Blackburn. Together these significant transport interventions (totalling £30.8m) will help tackle congestion, address safety concerns and promote active travel between key origins and destinations (including links to the town centre). This will support the Council's Local Plan and Blackburn Growth Axis ambitions, help drive prosperity across East Lancashire, and reduce emissions and improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the area. The outcome of bids are scheduled to be announced in the autumn of 2022.

Local Transport Plan – Annual Improvements Programme

The 2022/23 Local Transport Plan was approved at March Executive Board and includes improvements to 4.9km of roads, 14 bridges / structures and various projects across traffic signals, drainage and street lighting assets.

Delivery of the programme is on track and to date schemes completed include:

- All carriageway resurfacing schemes were undertaken in August and September, delivering 4.9km of improvements to our network;

- Four bridges schemes, including Whalley New Road, Brownhill Railway Bridge, confined space inspections and Wainwright Way lighting scheme; and
- Two drainage schemes, Aqueduct Road, Blackburn and Jack's Key Drive, Darwen

Cycling and Walking

Established in January 2022 Active Travel England (ATE) is Government's new cycling and walking body. They were set up to improve cycling and walking infrastructure across the country and are responsible for managing budgets and awarding funding for projects relating to active travel.

In August 2022 the Council was invited to undertake an assessment which determined our Capability and Ambition funding for 2022/23. We were assessed at Level 1 and will receive £55K to deliver capability building and behavioural change initiatives across the Borough and this will allow us to continue the work we have undertaken.

Enhanced Bus Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan

The Executive Board in June approved the Council entering into an Enhanced Partnership with our bus operators. This ensures that we are compliant with Government's Bus Back Better, a National Bus Strategy (NBS). Two requirements of the strategy are for the Council and its operators and to enter into a statutory 'Enhanced Partnership' to continue to receive funding; and deliver the improvements included within the published Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

The Council was successful in attaining funding for our BSIP (which was a joint submission with Lancashire County Council). Only a minority Local Transport Authorities were successful. Funding of £3.722M has now been confirmed for the next 3 years, comprising revenue funding of £1.155M, to deliver service support and to develop a multi-operator ticketing scheme, and £2.567M capital, for infrastructure improvement.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Climate Emergency Action Plan

Work continues on the delivery of a number of actions set out in the Council's latest Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), including: proposals for tree planting in the 2022/23 season; roll-out of Council-wide staff training; and establishment of a People's Jury. The People's Jury is a representative group of 32 residents of the Borough who have been recruited to identify proposals and recommendations on what the Council, Government, residents, businesses and others should be doing to help tackle the Climate Emergency locally. The outcomes of this process will help to steer the Council and other stakeholder to the priorities for 2023 and beyond and reflected in future CEAP updates. The Jury will meet across eight sessions starting at the end of September, weekly until early December. The process is being managed independently by Shared Futures CIC.

Safer Roads Operational Group and Strategy

Following approval of the Safer Roads Strategy we continue to work collaboratively to deliver upon our action plan, focusing on Engagement, Education, Enforcement and

Engineering. The primary aim of our strategy is to reduce casualties on the Borough's roads with secondary aims 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.

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

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

Housing Developments

Further to the Council's agreed Growth Programme, the following major housing projects involving Council land are continuing to progress:

- Haslingden Road Housing Site – Keepmoat Homes have secured planning permission to develop 300 new homes to include 160 family homes for sale and up to 50 keyworker affordable homes in the first phase. Legal agreements are being finalised and Keepmoat plan to be on site later this year.
- Whalley Old Road Housing Site - Vistry Partnerships confirmed as Preferred Bidder for the site to deliver 165 high quality family homes. A detailed planning application has been submitted for consideration and Vistry intend to bring their flagship 'Bovis Homes' brand to the site. Blackburn will be the first site to offer Bovis Homes across Lancashire/Pennine Lancashire
- Holden Fold Housing Site – Tenders for the residential development site in Darwen (former Moorland School site and adjoining land), which is part Council-owned, were sent out in April and attracted 9 bidders. Bids are currently at second stage and being assessed to gauge the best housing mix and quality, scheme layout and land offer for the site. A preferred bidder is planned to be recommended to the Executive Board over the coming months.

Progress on selected other developments on Council land:

- Persimmon Homes are established on the Roe Lee site and continue to build and sell new homes.
- McDermott Homes continue with a successful build programme at Lomond Gardens, where the first residents have started to move in.
- Countryside Homes and Together Housing are making good progress at their development of 390 new homes of mixed tenure on two sites on Fishmoor Drive and one site on Roman Road. Countryside are planning an event to mark handover of first phase of homes on Roman Road in October.
- Elan Homes, Milking Lane, Lower Darwen – which the Council owns as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture – have secured planning permission and are soon to start on site.

- McDermott Homes at Ellison Fold Way, Darwen, are making good progress at their development which will deliver a combined total of around 340 new family dwellings which including 70 affordable houses plus contributions towards more school places, roads and improving the Blacksnape Play Area. Part of the site was Council-owned.

Employment Developments

Further to the Council's agreed Growth Programme, the following major commercial projects involving Council land are continuing to progress:

- Barnfield Construction has started site clearance at Dock St / Eden St, where new employment units are to be provided.
- At Carl Fogarty Way, construction of new commercial units is expected to commence this Autumn at Plot 1, and the revised planning application for further units at Plot 4 will be determined at the September Planning and Highways Committee. A commercial development at Plot 6 is also being assessed in planning, and is expected to commence in 2023. Informal Tender bids have been received for the disposal of Plot 3, with the preferred bidder to be selected at a future Executive Board meeting.
- Development of new industrial / commercial units at Millbank Business Park in Lower Darwen, which is owned by the Council's Joint Venture Company with Barnfield Construction, is well under-way.

PLACE, PRIORITY 7: SUPPORTING OUR TOWN CENTRES AND BUSINESSES

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

Major construction at Blakey Moor Terrace is progressing well with the majority of the unstable structure now dismantled. Repair and reconstruction will take place over the next 12 months and we are working closely with the contractor to ensure disruption to surround roads and businesses is minimised.

Phase II internal refurbishment of 35 Northgate (former Ribblesdale Hotel) is complete. Shsh Bar hope to be ready to open in early October.

Two further shop front restoration schemes for 34 (Baileys Jewellers) and 36-40 (Wellcome pound shop) Northgate are now onsite for approximately 12 weeks.

Morrisons Relocation

Maple Grove Blackburn (Joint Venture Partnership between the Council and Maple Grove) has agreed heads of terms with Morrisons for purchase of the former Thwaites brewery site for the construction of a new store. The contract is being prepared and design progressed with a planning application scheduled to be submitted in late 2022.

St Johns Refurbishment Project

A full design team including OMI Architects have been appointed to prepare the design for the refurbishment of the former St John's Church. Design proposals for an innovation hub are progressing with the aim to provide a range of flexible work

spaces to support individuals and help businesses to thrive in Blackburn. A planning application for the refurbishment project is scheduled to be submitted in late 2022.

Levelling Up Fund 2 - Blackburn Business Innovation District (Phase One)

A £20m Levelling Up Fund (LUF) submission has been submitted to support the first phase development of a new Business Innovation District (BID) in Blackburn. LUF funding, if approved, will unlock the first phase of the town centre masterplan with a new £60m skills and education campus of national significance. This scheme is part of a £250m investment framework for the town centre – the largest town centre development of its kind in the North West. The BID is essential to the ambitious plan by delivering 1,200 new jobs, 400 new homes and £1bn of new economic activity over the next decade, outcomes critical to levelling-up the Borough. The outcome of bids are scheduled to be announced in the autumn of 2022.