

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
DATE: 20th January 2023**

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 and the Planning Inspectorate appointed two Planning Inspectors to conduct the Examination in Public (EiP) process.

The appointed inspectors reviewed all the Local Plan submission documents and raised a series of Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) with the Council, which is standard practice, and these were published in November. Public hearings will take place in the Town Hall from 31st Jan – 9th Feb and from 28th Feb – 9th March. Any updates, and all documents relating to the EiP process are available on the Council's Local Plan webpage at www.blackburn.gov.uk/localplan.

Local Transport Plan

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 which were undertaken in August and September, delivering 4.9km of improvements to our network with three additional sites, including Stones Bank Road, Griffin Street and Whalley New Road, planned for completion by the end of February.
- Four bridges schemes, including Lithermans Culvert, Walk Mill Bridge, Ellenshaw Street footway and Wainwright Way lighting scheme along with the assessment of High Street Bridge. Works to repair highway retaining walls at Ryal Fold and Redearth Road are planned for delivery early this year.
- Two drainage schemes including Aqueduct Road, Blackburn and Jack's Key Drive, Darwen.

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

Work is underway to review the Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP). The HIAMP is a key requirement for ensuring the Council is well placed to secure future highway maintenance funding that may become available.

Winter Service (Gritting)

In mid-December, the Borough experienced prolonged adverse weather events, with Highways Service's working 24/7 and undertaking 106 planned gritting operations, covering 1,230 miles of roads.

The Network Management Team also responded to over 200 additional customer service requests. The gritting effort was supplemented by our Community Grit Squads which were introduced to enhance the resilience of our existing gritting operations. A digital map of all designated grit bin locations and gritting routes has also been produced. The map will shortly be placed on the BwD website to enable the public to identify their nearest grit bin.

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 (LUF 2) 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 submissions has been delayed for sometime with Government scheduled to make announcements by the end of January 2023.

Cultural Services

The Christmas performances at King George's Hall and Darwen Library Theatre were a huge success. Darwen's Dear Santa, aimed at younger children attracted increased audiences compared to last year. Whilst the traditional pantomime at King George's Hall saw audiences of all ages flooding in to watch Jack and the Beanstalk, enjoying the vibrant show, music and slap stick comedy; 2022's pantomime was the second highest grossing in the last ten years.

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery - Arts Council England's awarding BMaG one of its prestigious National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) recognises the importance and value of telling the Borough's vibrant story. The additional funding over the next three years will help to grow engagement activities, reshape how our rich history and collections are displayed and shared and expand the collaborative work with partners and our communities going forward. It is a huge and exciting opportunity, harnessing the cultural creativity that the Council and the borough has worked hard to be establish. The NPO starts in April 2023 and will go through to 2026.

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: planting of 10,000 trees in the 2022/23 season; the preparation of heat decarbonisation plans for the Council's largest emitting buildings (this will assist the Council to be bid-ready for future rounds

of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding); and conclusion of the People's Climate Jury. This process is being managed independently by Shared Futures CIC, and will be reporting its recommendations to the Council and other key stakeholders by the end of January.

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.
- Whalley Old Road Housing Site - Vistry Partnerships confirmed as Preferred Bidder for the site to deliver 165 high quality family homes. Planning permission was granted at the November committee for the scheme of new homes which will include Vistry's flagship 'Bovis Homes' brand to the site. Blackburn will be the first site to offer Bovis Homes in Lancashire.
- Holden Fold Housing Site - The December Executive Board approved the appointment of Vistry partnerships as preferred bidder for the site following a successful two stage tender exercise. Vistry plan to build around 477 new homes of mixed tenure to include 2, 3 and 4 bed family homes including 170 affordable homes for rent and home ownership. Vistry plan to build new homes under their 'Bovis' and 'Linden Homes' brands.

Progress on selected other developments on Council land:

- 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 have completed sale of 6 new homes by October 2022 which are now occupied by the new owners. More completions are planned for early 2023.
- 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 include 70 affordable homes plus contributions towards more school places, roads and have improved the Blacksnake Play Area. Part of the site was Council-owned.
- McDermott Homes continue with a successful build programme at Lomond Gardens, Blackburn, where residents have started to move in.
- Elan Homes, Milking Lane, Lower Darwen – which the Council owns as part of the Barnfield Blackburn Ltd Joint Venture – have started works on site to build 76 new family homes.

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 progressed construction at Dock St / Eden St, where new employment units are to be provided.
- At Carl Fogarty Way, construction of new commercial units has commenced clearance works at Plot 1, with a revised project being considered through planning. The planning application for commercial units at Plot 4 was determined in the Autumn of 2022, and works are expected to commence on site in February. A commercial development at Plot 6 is also being assessed in planning, and is expected to commence in 2023. The preferred bidder for Plot 3, Autolab, was selected at Executive Board in October, and a planning application for the site development is expected to be received in the Spring.
- 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

Revised designs have been approved for Blakey Moor Terrace. The scheme will now see the external restoration of unit 2 and a curved new-build extension to replace unit 1 that had to be demolished as a result of major structural failures.

The groundworks were completed before Christmas and building work will commence in January for approx. 10-12 months. Talks are on-going with potential F&B operators. The former Ribblesdale Hotel at 35 Northgate is currently being marketed and a number of potential F&B operators have viewed the property.

Works to 34 (Baileys Jewellers) and 36-40 (former Wellcome pound shop) Northgate are complete and new signage is due to be installed in the next few weeks.

We are working with Uncultured Creatives based at Lord Street West to commission a new piece of public art for Northgate. This will highlight the historical significance of Victorian film pioneers Mitchell and Kenyon and reflect Blackburn's newly recognised status as the location of the world's first Western film.

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 early 2023.

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 early 2023.

UK Shared Prosperity Funding 2022-2025

Government has recently confirmed the Council's 3-year Shared Prosperity Investment Plan submitted at the end of July last year for a total of almost £7 million. The detailed Plan for the Borough, overseen by the Shared Prosperity Board, focusses activity on improving the quality of life and outcomes for our residents focussing on cultural regeneration, improving community facilities, supporting young people, supporting local businesses and improving skills. It will provide revenue support to add value to the Council's ambitious growth plans and supports the delivery of the £100 million Darwen Town Deal and the planned £250 million Blackburn Town Centre Masterplan.

The funding, already in year 1 of the programme, although significantly less than previously received through European Union funding will work hard to contribute to the Council's Corporate Plans both current and emerging, supporting stronger, more vibrant communities and increasing pride in place.

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

As above, the Council is expecting to hear whether their £20 million bid for Levelling Up Funds (LUF 2) has been successful by the end of January. This will support the first phase development of a new Business Innovation District (BID) in Blackburn. LUF 2 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.