

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR & DEPUTY  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE: MARTIN KELLY  
DATE: 3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2024

### ALL PRIORITIES:

#### Local Plan (2021-2037)

##### Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Two new SPDs to support adoption of the new Local Plan are already in effect:

- 1) [The Climate Impact Framework SPD](#) (adopted 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024); and
- 2) [The Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing SPD](#) (adopted 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024).

The third SPD to be brought forward, the Natural Environment SPD, will provide additional guidance to support the policies of the new Local Plan relating to: nature and biodiversity; habitats and species; trees, woodland and hedgerows; green and blue spaces; flooding and water; soils and peatland; air quality and environmental opportunity areas. The draft Natural Environment SPD has a 6-week statutory public consultation period running until Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024. A consultation statement will be prepared following this period, showing comments received and how they are considered in preparing the final SPD. This is expected to be brought before the Council's Executive Board for consideration and approval in December 2024.

Further SPDs that the Council has committed to preparing through 2024 and 2025 to support the new Local Plan are set out in the [Local Development Scheme](#) (adopted in September 2023).

##### North East Blackburn Masterplan

Work progresses well with the Masterplan, Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Design Code to guide development of the strategic housing allocation in the Local Plan at North East Blackburn for up to 1,500 homes (Local Plan site reference H195).

Public consultation on initial proposals (options) for the site concluded on the 11 August. The Council has received around 190 responses, with around 85 people attending a public 'drop in' event at St Gabriel's Church Hall to discuss the plans with Council officers and Stantec consultants.

A Consultation Statement is being prepared that will summarise all the key issues raised and will set out how these will shape the next stage of masterplan

preparation. A full record of comments will be provided in Appendices. The Council expects to consult on a preferred option Masterplan before the end of the year.

## Active Travel

The Walk To School Outreach (WTSO) project aims to support the government in achieving its target of having 55% of children walking to school by 2025. The goal is to facilitate an 8-percentage point modal shift towards 'walk all the way' journeys through the implementation of the WOW (Walk to School) challenge in the schools we collaborate with. By encouraging more children to travel actively, we aim to reduce traffic, congestion, air pollution, and road hazards, thereby creating a safer and healthier environment for young people

16 schools have signed up to the Living Streets WoW Schools programme.

- St Luke and St Philip's C of E Primary Academy
- St Antony's RC Primary
- St James C of E Primary School
- Daisyfield Community School
- Roe Lee Park Primary School
- St Michael with St John C of E Primary School
- Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School
- Audley Junior School
- Cedars Primary School
- St Barnabas CE Primary
- Longshaw Community Primary
- St Barnabas and St Paul's CE Primary
- St Cuthbert's CE Primary
- St Joseph's RC Primary,
- St Stephen's CE Primary,
- Sudell Primary School



Across all 16 schools we are now seeing, on average a 30% increase in overall active travel rates. Government target for walking all the way to school is 55% by 2025. Average rates across participating WOW schools is now 54.1% which is 13% higher than the baseline. 4 out of the 5 school route audits have been undertaken and the action plans from these are now being drafted. The audits will highlight barriers for children walking to school and we will work with the school and other partners to address these issues where possible.

Work will continue to be undertaken with these 16 schools and further schools will be recruited to the programme this academic year, ensuring momentum continues towards achieving and maintaining the Government targets for active travel to school.

## **PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES**

### **Cultural Services**

**BwD Children's Literature Festival:** The 2024 festival was an overwhelming success with over 2,000 attendances including school class visits, authors' readings and weekend community days.

**Library Summer Reading Challenge:** encourages children to keep reading during the school holiday. The challenge aims to reduce the summer reading dip and help children to be ready for a great start to the new term in September. All libraries were involved, with the 1,062 children collecting rewards with a certificate and a medal for those who completed the challenge.

**Library Opening Hours:** Thanks to our dedicated volunteers from September, opening hours at Mill Hill Library will increase on Tuesday afternoons (1.30 – 4.30pm) and Roman Road Library will be open an additional 2 morning sessions (Monday 9am -12pm and Wednesday 9am to 2pm). This is due to the relocation of the Food Larder to the library.

**KGH:** Internal and external works have been undertaken over the summer period. Changes to the entrance to the yard at the side of KGH will improve access for touring vehicles such as articulated lorries and band coaches. Internally, intrusive surveys have identified and mapped cable and duct runs throughout the building. KGH reopened on 15<sup>th</sup> September. A very busy programme of events follows throughout the autumn culminating with this year's pantomime, Cinderella.

**DLT:** Audiences flocked to DLT to be entertained by Paddy McGuinness' 'Works in Progress' performances. Paddy used these 6/7 shows to test out and develop material for his sell-out nationwide tour. Not only was Darwen the venue for his warm ups, but Paddy's main tour will kick off its national run with the first gig at KGH. More information about shows and events across both venues is available at [www.bwdvenues.com](http://www.bwdvenues.com)

**Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery:** There have been over 10,000 visitors to the museum and art gallery in the last 2 months from the record- breaking Festival of Making with the installation of Infinite Hands by Nehal Aamir to Refugee week celebrations and the summer holidays filled with artists, workshops and activities including painting, modelmaking and printmaking.

The New Exhibition: *The Secret Live of Stuff, from October 24* will explore what happens to objects over time, with conservation and repair workshops taking place within the galleries.

**Turton Tower:** Despite the weather the grounds of Turton Tower have been buzzing with life! There are two new bee hives added to the apiary as well as open garden events in the kitchen garden. There have also been outdoor theatre performances on the lawn and after a day of live chainsaw-carving demonstrations a new sculpture is in place in the Tower grounds.

## **PLACE PRIORITY 5: SAFE & CLEAN ENVIRONMENT**

### **Climate Emergency Action Plan**

A broad range of activities are continuing to support delivery of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). This includes work on projects covering heat decarbonisation, carbon capture, transport and housing.

The annual update of the Council's progress in 2023/24 against the CEAP, and priorities for 2024/25, was reported to the Council's Executive Board meeting of 11th July. The Executive Board report contains a great level of detail on the current work programme. Further high-level updates on progress will be provided in subsequent Council Forum reports, at the appropriate time.

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

### **Housing Developments**

Further to the Council's agreed Growth Programme for 2024/25, the following major housing projects involving Council land are continuing to progress:

- Holden Fold Housing Site – Countryside Homes scheme of 477 new homes. The Council's Moor Lane Highways Improvement works are in the final stages. Countryside Homes are progressing well with preparing the site in readiness to commence the build programme.
- Beehive Mill Site Acquisition – The Council has completed the purchase of the site which has now been leased to Countryside Homes for use as a compound area for their Holden Fold housing development. Survey works are being carried out on the buildings in preparation for demolition.
- Haslingden Road Housing Site – Keepmoat Homes scheme of 148 family homes for sale and 57 keyworker & affordable homes for Great Places Housing Association. The build programme for the keyworker apartments has started and progressing well. A PR event was held on site in July to mark the start of the development
- Borrowdale Avenue Housing site – Together Housing scheme of 13 two-bed bungalows for older persons. The build programme has started and progressing well, a PR event was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> September to mark the start of the development.

- Whalley Old Road Housing Site – Bovis Homes scheme of 165 high quality family homes has commenced. This will be first site to offer the Bovis Homes quality homes in Lancashire.
- New affordable homes have been completed and occupied at the Ellison Fold Way housing site, along with new homes for open market sale.
- Development of new housing also continues to progress at Fishmoor Drive, Tower View, Roe Lee and Milking Lane.

### **Empty Properties**

Over the last few months, the team has successfully taken possession of a property on Fecit Brow that has stood empty for over 20 years. Acquired a long term empty property on Coleridge Street which would have adversely affected upcoming development proposals for the Griffin regeneration area. A CPO of a property on Lisbon Drive has been called in for an inquiry by written representation. The team continue to actively work with landlords of long term empty properties to bring them back into occupation.

## **PLACE, PRIORITY 7: SUPPORTING OUR TOWN CENTRES AND BUSINESSES**

### **Blakey Moor and the Cultural Quarter**

Work to the Blakey Moor Terrace is now complete and viewings with potential operators are on-going. The property is being marketed nationally and regionally for a quality food and drink operator.

The contractor has vacated 3-7 Blakey Moor (former Subway), and intrusive surveys have started to facilitate its refurbishment. Works are expected to start in the New Year to bring the property back into commercial use and there is already keen interest from an established licenced restaurant.

These works will complete the restoration of the entirety of Blakey Moor including the former Jubilee Public House, Blakey Moor Terrace, 3-7 Blakey Moor, former Ribblesdale Hotel and public realm improvements to support development of the wider Cultural Quarter around King George's Hall.

### **High Street Accelerator – King William Street Area**

Blackburn is one of 10 pilot towns selected for the High Street Accelerator program, receiving £237,000 from the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government to test ideas to revitalise the high street and £500,000 for environmental improvements. A new partnership is overseeing a short-term Action Plan and longer-term vision for high street.

The new “Discover Blackburn” website has been launched in partnership with Blackburn BID and a social media campaign with new videos and photos across Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok is helping to promote the town's offer.

Live music events and promotional offers are supporting the food, drink and evening offer, a regular street market will bring additional retail and the project is working closely with partners to enhance the town's festive programming.

Additional cleaning and maintenance has begun, and a sustainable planting scheme is being designed that will see more trees and improve pavement café areas, as well as new safety measures and better traffic management.