

Council Forum Report of the Executive Member for Growth and Development
Portfolio Co-ordinating Director – Director of Growth and Development
18 July 2019

This report provides a brief update on progress with key development priorities in this reporting period.

Local Plan Update

The Council are in the first year of a 3-year Local Plan Review process. Initial studies to establish the latest housing and economic development requirements for the Borough have been completed, and a “call for sites” exercise has also been carried out. The first round of public consultation is complete (11th Feb – 1st April) regarding the high-level strategic options.

Further evidence and technical studies are underway, and a “preferred options” plan will be drafted to identify the sites which could be allocated to meet the Borough’s requirements for housing and employment development up to 2036. The public consultation on preferred options is likely to take place in 2020.

Darwen Market Square

A number of successful events have been held on the new Square in April and May with positive feedback from residents and visitors. There has been a slight delay in completing the benches on site and this has meant that the site has been partially closed while these were finished by the end of June. The Council is working with the Town Council and other organisers to maximise the public usage of the Square.

Blakey Moor / Northgate / Jubilee Gardens Public Realm Improvements

Construction works to the public space and highways around King George’s Hall are due to be complete this month. The final phase includes works to the raised planters, seating and new trees. This will be followed by the unveiling of six decorative tree grates to celebrate artists who have played at King George’s Hall over the last 60 years; the cleaning and restoration of Gladstone’s statue; and the installation of a tiled artwork created by members of the public at this year’s National Festival of Making.

Following a competitive tendering exercise, Casey have been appointed to complete the Jubilee Square public realm works and will commence on site over the summer.

Council Housing Developments

Places for People (PfP), have now commenced construction works to develop 73 new family homes for affordable rent on the Alaska Street site. The new homes will be delivered through Modern Methods of Construction and will be manufactured off-site and erected on site. The development will provide good quality family homes to complement the extensive regeneration and new build previously undertaken by PfP in the Infirmary Waterside area.

Outline planning applications have been submitted for new housing developments at Lomond Gardens and Clarendon Road East.

Wainwright Way

Home Bargains have confirmed that they are due to start construction works on site w/c 15th July. Autolab have exchanged contracts for the remaining parcels, and are aiming to submit a planning application by the end of 2019.

Growth Deal Transport Schemes

The first of the Council's "Pennine Gateways" transport schemes, funded through Local Growth Fund 3 as part of the Northern Powerhouse, is now open to the general public.

Carl Fogarty Way, opened by the Blackburn born, four time World Superbike Championship winner on 26th June, has delivered the final phase of the Furthergate and Burnley Road Link Road project. The scheme will unlock land to enable the future development of new employment opportunities identified within the Council's adopted Local Plan and will improve access to and from the Town Centre and M65 Junction 6. Traffic conditions will change on Burnley Road and conditions will be quieter for residents, with associated improvements for road safety, congestion and air quality.

Work is now underway to prepare (site feasibility studies and surveys) for the first three development parcels at Furthergate. It is envisaged these parcels will be released later this year via the Council's Growth Framework.

Progress continues in relation to the Council's other Local Growth Fund 3 Transport schemes. The North Blackburn scheme is advancing well with surfacing works at Pleckgate Road now complete. Traffic signals are to be installed in late July 2019. Temporary traffic signals will be amended at Brownhill to enable new gantry and base installation and final intelligent signal equipment connection. Junction improvements at Whalley Old Road will follow-on from works at Brownhill Roundabout at the start of the Summer 2019 period.

Victoria Street / Northgate Link Road

The Victoria Street / Northgate Link Road scheme started in February 2019 and works are progressing well. Works are at an advanced stage at Sudell Cross / Northgate with footway paving and carriageway surfacing laid at Northgate and Sudell Cross. Excavations have begun on the Barbara Castle Way central reservation ahead of works starting on the Richmond Hill Link Road later in July 2019. Ducts for new traffic light equipment have also been laid in advance of changes to Barbara Castle Way junctions.

The Department for Transport funded project will remove vehicle congestion and conflicts, improve movement and access to significant new development sites, including King Georges Hall and Reel Cinema. Pedestrian facilities between the Town Centre and the Whalley Range area will also be significantly improved. The project, to be completed by March 2020, aims to

generate further economic activity and local productivity in the Blackburn inner urban and Town Centre areas.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

Phase 2 of the Council's Electric Vehicle (EV) charging project is complete. EV facilities are now available for use in Darwen and Blackburn Town Centre Car Parks, with Brown Street, Weir Street and Varley Street Car Parks each equipped with two 22kWh fast charging sockets.

This roll-out programme complements the first phase of EV charging points at Feilden Street and Darwen Market and supports the growing population of plug-in cars in the area. It estimated there are over 100 located in the Borough and over 1,000 in wider Lancashire and adjacent Greater Manchester North.

Further EV chargers will be available at Blackburn Cinema Car Park on the site of the former Waves and specifications are being finalised with Swarco UK under the "eVolt" brand.

Parking continues to be free for drivers whilst charging at Council Car Parks.