

## **Council Forum Report of the Executive Member for Growth and Development.**

### **Portfolio Co-ordinating Director – Director of Growth and Development**

**3 October 2019**

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

#### **Local Plan Update**

The Council are continuing to work on the evidence base for the new Local Plan – aiming for adoption in 2021. Potential future development sites are being assessed, which will lead to a “preferred options” draft plan being published for public consultation in 2020.

#### **Darwen Update**

The Square was completed for the Summer and a number of events have now been hosted, including the 1940s Day. The Brass Band competition, Food Festival and Christmas programme are all planned/in development for this quarter. A scheme is being costed to bring into use four units under Railway Road on the edge of the Square. Early interest has already been received with business cases tested in due course to ensure viability.

Although the Council was unsuccessful in securing High Street Fund status for Darwen Town Centre, Darwen has been included in the first phase of the Government’s Town Fund programme. We expect Government guidance shortly on the scope, timescales and requirements regarding the Town Fund programme. The Fund will enable the Council, in conjunction with key partners, to accelerate the delivery of a comprehensive growth plan for Darwen.

#### **Blakey Moor / Northgate / Jubilee Gardens Public Realm Improvements**

The planting scheme and benches have now been installed at Blakey Moor and Northgate. The final sections of paving are due to be complete by the end of September with decorative tree grills to follow. The focus of work will now move to the restoration of Blakey Moor Terrace. The contract for a Design Team has been tendered and is expected to be awarded by the end of September.

Our construction contractor, Casey, have completed the first phase of Jubilee Square and will commence further phases aligned to the Cinema Development.

#### **Housing Developments**

Two Council-owned housing development sites are currently under construction: Places for People are building 73 new family homes for affordable rent at Alaska Street, and earlier this month Hearle Homes

commenced construction of 17 family houses at the former Tower View site in Darwen.

Persimmon Homes are progressing well with construction at the former Council-owned site at Roe Lee; 155 family homes.

Outline planning applications were approved for Council sites at the August Planning & Highways Committee meeting; for new housing developments at Lomond Gardens and Clarendon Road East; and the detailed planning application for Tower Road (former Fenisccliffe Bank) will be presented to the 19<sup>th</sup> September Planning Committee meeting. Subject to approval, Applethwaite Homes aim to commence by demolishing the former care home building before Christmas.

Plans to develop the Griffin clearance site to provide 141 new family homes are currently being finalised. A planning application is planned to be submitted late early October/early November.

### **Wainwright Way**

Home Bargains have commenced construction works on the western plot and Autolab are aiming to submit a planning application by the end of 2019 for development of the eastern plot.

### **Growth Deal Transport Schemes: North Blackburn**

The Council's "Pennine Gateways" transport schemes, funded through Local Growth Fund 3, are progressing through the delivery phase. The second package, North Blackburn, is advancing well with resurfacing and lining works at Pleckgate Road and Brownhill Roundabout now complete. Traffic signal and controller commissioning is now at an advanced stage for each junction.

Permanent traffic signal installation is nearing completion at Whalley Old Road, with improved pedestrian crossing facilities introduced on this busy crossing. The upgrade of Emerald Avenue commenced on 16<sup>th</sup> September, including changes to kerbing and new traffic signal equipment.

The North Blackburn packages will improve traffic conditions on the "Arterial Road" making conditions better for pedestrians and cyclists and to accommodate future housing developments.

### **Growth Deal Transport Schemes: South East Blackburn**

The third and final package of "Pennine Gateway", South East Blackburn, has now been submitted for Planning. The package will see the widening of Haslingden Road, the creation of a new link road at Blackamoor and a new entrance into Royal Blackburn Hospital at Old Bank Lane.

The project will:

- Improve congestion on the Haslingden Road corridor to / from Royal Blackburn Hospital and M65 Junction 5

- Improve air quality and pedestrian facilities at Blackamoor Junction (which is a designated Air Quality Management Area)
- Enable further development of employment opportunities on the Borough's major growth corridor
- Support future housing growth in the Borough, both by way of family housing and housing associated with Royal Blackburn Hospital

Planning applications will be considered by the Council's Planning Committee in December 2019 before the scheme is submitted for Full Approval to Transport for Lancashire and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership in early 2020.

### **Social Integration – Transport Research**

The role of transport is a key element within the Council's Social Integration Programme "Our Community, Our Future", a joint initiative with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The project seeks to better link people and neighbourhoods to zones of employment, physical assets, community and social spaces.

The first phase of the project is underway and the Council is now undertaking research with public transport users, to get a better understanding of where people want to get to, awareness of available transport options, and the difficulties currently faced in getting around. The Council will be liaising with transport users and community groups by way of face-to-face meetings, workshop sessions and questionnaires. Research will inform the next stage of the project which will identify opportunities for innovative transport options and solutions within the Borough.

### **One Public Estate**

We expect the next One Public Estate funding round (OPE 8) will be launched shortly, with bids to be submitted by around mid-November 2019 and funding awards in January/February 2020. There is likely to be a focus on housing delivery, with revenue funding to support the development of project concepts and feasibility studies; and possibly a further round of Housing Land Release Funding providing capital funding for site preparation, remediation and infrastructure works. The OPE Programme Team has started to develop a pipeline of potential projects to submit for funding.

### **Brexit Co-ordination**

Every Council is required to identify a "Brexit Co-ordinator" to support the Government's preparations for the UK's departure from the EU on 31 October. The Director of Growth and Development is currently performing this role and supporting the Chief Executive in managing the Council's preparations, while linking with broader strands of risk management work involving local partners and regional and national bodies.

The Council is working hard to better understand and mitigate any potential local impacts on service delivery, and working with local business bodies to signpost local businesses to available support on trade, contracting and workforce development issues.