

Notice of:	EXECUTIVE
Decision Number:	EX35/2018
Relevant Officer:	Jane Saleh, Head of Planning Strategy
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mark Smith Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development
Date of Meeting:	16 July 2018

BLACKPOOL RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOTEL STUDY 2018

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To present the findings and recommendations of the recently completed Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) (refer Appendix 6a to the Executive report).

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 To agree the findings and recommendations of the Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) (refer Appendix 6a to the Executive report) which will inform the planning policy framework including Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies and allow publication on the Council’s website.

2.2 To endorse the proposed Local Thresholds for Impact Assessment for use in the determination of retail and leisure planning applications (refer Appendix 6c to the Executive report).

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To inform the development of policy in the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document in order to support Blackpool’s future regeneration and growth.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council priority is: “The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”.

5.0 Background

5.1 The Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) is an important evidence base document which will assist informing the local planning policy framework in particular the emerging Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document and the delivery of the vision, objectives and policies set out in the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2012-2027).¹ In addition the Study provides additional recommendations in respect of other policy guidance required to help the future growth, improvement and regeneration of the Blackpool Town Centre.

The previous evidence base was provided by the ‘Fylde Coast Retail Study’ produced by Roger Tym and Partners (RTP) in 2011 and the Visitor Accommodation Study for the Fylde Coast Sub-Region produced by HLL Humberts Leisure in 2009. Given the length of time since the publication of these studies, it was necessary to undertake a new study, informed by current empirical research and to respond to changes in national and local economic conditions and national planning policy and guidance, to ensure an up to date evidence base to inform emerging policy and development management decisions.

Consequently, Blackpool Council commissioned White Young Green (WYG) in September 2017 to prepare an updated study which reflects the requirements for the preparation of such documents set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 23 and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

In accordance with the commissioning Brief in summary the 2018 study provides:

- an overview of current and emerging national retail trends that are likely to have an impact on the retail sector in Blackpool (Chapter 2;)

¹ The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy was Adopted January 2016

- an assessment of:
 - ⇒ **the shopping behaviour of local residents living within and adjacent to Blackpool to identify convenience and comparisons goods shopping patterns** (Chapter 4);
 - ⇒ **the vitality and viability of existing town and district centres including health checks** (Chapter 5);
 - ⇒ **quantitative and qualitative needs of retail and leisure floorspace across the Local Plan period through to 2027 and longer term to 2032** (Chapters 6 and 7);
 - ⇒ **the future need for commercial leisure facilities** (Chapter 8);
 - ⇒ **the future capacity for 3*, 4* and 5* hotels within Blackpool** (Chapter 9);
- **advice on the need for an appropriate retail/leisure threshold(s) for requiring an impact assessment to accompany a planning application** (Chapter 10).

The Retail and Leisure aspects of the Study is informed by a telephone survey of 1,150 households (October 2017) across Blackpool and its wider catchment area including parts of Fylde and Wyre, to establish shopping and leisure habits². In addition, a town centre survey of 100 people was also undertaken to gain an insight into the views and behaviours of residents and visitors in relation to their visits to Blackpool Town Centre.

Healthchecks of Blackpool Town Centre and the 5 District Centres were undertaken to evaluate their vitality and viability. These assessments draw on a number of key indicators in accordance with NPPG including an assessment of diversity of use, the level of footfall, retailer representation, accessibility and general environmental quality.

An assessment of the existing provision of accredited 3*, 4* and 5* hotels was also undertaken to appraise the quantitative and qualitative requirements for additional accredited hotel provision across the Borough. The previous studies most notably the 2009 Humberts Study, identified that the Borough needed to increase the provision of higher quality hotels and improve the overall offer in order to attract a range of demographics to the resort. The Study is informed in part by a Hotel Managers Survey which was sent to all of the twenty 3* and above hotels within the Borough.

² Appendix 1 of the Study provides a map of the overall catchment area (OCA) and survey zones.

Headline Findings

This section of the report highlights the headline findings of the Study. A more detailed summary can be found in Appendix 2 to this report.

- By 2023, there will be a comparisons goods floorspace requirement of between 7,700 sq.m and 12,800 sq.m, increasing to between 18,300 sq.m and 30,600 sq.m by 2032;
- There is no quantitative requirement for any additional convenience goods floorspace within Blackpool's catchment up to 2032 once existing commitments are considered;
- There is a qualitative requirement to provide an additional foodstore towards the northern periphery of Blackpool town centre should a site within or on the edge of the centre become available. The scale of foodstore appropriate would fit within the 1,500 to 2,500 sq.m (gross) bracket, ensuring that the turnover of which would not untenably impact on the existing Sainsbury's foodstore at Talbot Gateway. This would improve choice, serving the area to the north of the town centre and to the south of Bispham which would also serve the areas of deprivation surrounding the town centre;
- The role of Blackpool town centre as a convenience retail destination for Study Area residents has remained broadly static since 2010 at around 5.6% market share despite the development of Sainsbury's at Talbot Gateway;
- Blackpool town centre attracts just under a third of all spending on comparison goods from the Study Area, equating to some £267.1m. (30.2%). This market share is considered relatively low given that Blackpool is a sub-regional centre. The market share has decreased 9% since 2010;
- In the context of the Principal Retail Core, the Houndshell Shopping Centre is performing well however the surrounding streets are struggling with significant issues relating to vacancies and poor-quality retail stock including Bank Hey St and Church St. Opportunities remain outside of Houndshell to redevelop and regenerate key areas currently

in decline to create refurbished bigger units to better meet comparison operators' requirements;

- There are significant gaps in the town centre retail offer, with no representation in a number of comparison goods sub-categories, most notably within the DIY and gardening, furniture, electrical and recreational goods categories. The chemist/health and beauty offer is also well below the UK average;
- There is a requirement to improve the town centre overall offer in terms of large, modern format units to provide optimum space for national multiples to avoid either the relocation of operators to retail parks (both within and outside of the Borough), or the decision of new operators to locate to out of centre destinations in the first instance. There may be opportunities to bring forward larger retail schemes towards the edge of the town centre (on available and suitable sites within the town centre boundary), to deliver units suitable to accommodate the gaps in the comparison goods offer;
- There are clear areas of poor overall environmental quality, and a lack of consistency across the centre in terms of overall aesthetics and offer;
- Collectively, Blackpool's three main out-of-centre retail parks attract some £173.6m, or 19.6%, of the Study Area residents' spending on comparison goods, amounting to around two thirds of that spent in Blackpool town centre. Competition from out-of-centre retail destinations in Blackpool is therefore substantial and an issue which is evidently affecting the performance and offer of the town centre;
- The continued growth of Blackpool's out-of-centre/retail parks represent a threat to the future vitality and viability of the defined centres in the Borough;
- The Borough's district centres are generally performing well with some boundary amendments proposed relating to Waterloo Road District Centre and the amendment of Bispham Village to a local centre;
- There is a need to introduce Local Impact Thresholds to assist in

protecting the vitality and viability of the Boroughs centres;

- Other than food and drink there is a limited requirement for additional commercial leisure facilities beyond those facilities which are committed. The assessment indicates that the existing facilities within the Borough and the town centre, are sufficient from a purely quantitative perspective to meet the requirements of existing residents;
- There is a requirement for additional restaurant facilities within the borough particularly within Blackpool Town Centre. The existing offer within the town centre is generally at the lower end and focussed more on cafes and pubs, although there are a series of middle tier national multiple restaurant operators such as Pizza Express and Nandos;
- There is no quantitative or qualitative requirement for additional accredited hotels in Blackpool beyond those already committed within the town centre, which will offer a wide range and price of hotel rooms across the centre (this excludes any additional hotel requirement which may emerge from the Leisure Quarter development).

Study Recommendations

Informed by the findings of the Study, a number of recommendations have been put forward to assist in addressing the issues raised:

- i) The Council needs to continue to control the expansion/change of use of out-of-centre retail floorspace to protect the vitality and viability of centres and plan positively for town centre/edge-of-centre development opportunities through the identification of sites in Part 2 of the Local Plan to accommodate the additional comparison retail floorspace identified up to 2027. This should include a review of larger Council-owned sites within and around the edge of Blackpool town centre to provide sequentially preferable sites providing the nature and scale of required floorspace in accessible locations and at a competitive price. This will assist in resisting further out of centre retail expansion, as well as benefiting the overall future marketing and strategy for the town centre.
- ii) The adopted town centre boundary as defined in the Core Strategy is robust, as is the principal retail core and no amendments to either are

recommended. The current designations and allocations set by the Core Strategy are considered to be wholly compliant with guidance set out in the NPPF;

iii) The title of the Principal Retail Core in Saved Local Plan policy should be amended to 'primary shopping area' in Part 2 of the Local Plan in order to reflect the definitions set out in Annex 2 of the NPPF;

iv) In accordance with the NPPF primary and secondary shopping frontages, which are generally contained within the primary shopping area, should be designated to include the following streets in Blackpool Town Centre:

- Primary frontages to comprise the Houndshell Shopping Centre, Victoria Street and some units on Bank Hey Street - to include a high proportion of retail uses which may include food, drinks, clothing and household goods
- Secondary frontages to comprise the majority of Bank Hey Street and Church Street to provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses such as restaurants, cinemas and businesses –and help to address the vacancy issues

v) Remove the following designations from the Local Plan Proposals Map relating to Blackpool Town Centre through the adoption of the Local Plan Part 2, as they do not remain relevant in accordance with NPPF:

Houndshell Shopping Centre;
Retail/Café Zone;
Mixed-Use Zone; and
Leisure Zone.

vi) Amend the following District Centre boundaries:

- Waterloo Road – Given its peripheral function and the long-term nature of the vacancy problems, remove Bond Street from the district centre and direct retail towards vacant units on Waterloo Road whilst exploring the possibility of securing alternative uses on Bond Street for example, residential uses

- Bispham Village is currently part of Bispham District Centre along with Red Bank Road - re-designate Bispham Village as a local centre with no amendments to its existing boundary, as defined by Saved Policy BH13 of the Local Plan
- vii) Introduce the following Local Impact Thresholds (Refer Appendix 3) to provide greater protection to the Borough's centres:

Impact assessment will be necessary for proposals (including the formation of mezzanine floors) for/or which include retail and leisure developments which are not located within a defined centre where:

- The proposal provides a floorspace greater than 500 sq.m gross; or
 - The proposal is located within 800 metres of the boundary of District Centre and is greater than 300 sq.m gross;
 - The proposal is located with 800m of the boundary of a Local Centre and is greater than 200sqm.
- viii) To engage with commercial agents and land/property owners to better understand supply and demand within Blackpool Town Centre. Separate, standalone advice is required to assess the current commercial requirements for Blackpool and the realistic prospects of attracting additional operators into the centre to improve the vitality and viability of the town centre and address the high level of prolonged vacancy in specific areas and to assist in resisting further out of centre retail development;
- ix) To review and update the existing Town Centre Strategy to tie together the progress made to date in the town centre and take a step forward in creating one overall visionary masterplan based on relevant agency advice and town planning principles in determining a way forward for Blackpool Town Centre beyond the strategic schemes identified in the Core Strategy

- 5.2 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No
- 5.3 List of Appendices:
- Appendix 6a – Blackpool Retail, Hotel and Commercial Leisure Study 2018
Appendix 6a continued – Study Appendices
Appendix 6b – Summary and Key Findings of the Blackpool Retail, Hotel and Leisure Study 2018
Appendix 6c – Local Impact Thresholds
- 6.0 Legal considerations:**
- 6.1 The Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) informs the development of policy in the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies which forms part of the Council’s statutory Development Plan.
- 7.0 Human Resources considerations:**
- 7.1 The Local Plan Part 2 is being resourced by existing staff within the Planning Strategy Team.
- 8.0 Equalities considerations:**
- 8.1 No adverse equalities considerations. The Local Plan Part 2 will contribute to the Council priorities set out in the Council Plan.
- 9.0 Financial considerations:**
- 9.1 The work is being undertaken within existing budgetary provisions.
- 10.0 Risk management considerations:**
- 10.1 The Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) informs the development of policy in the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies which provides the statutory planning framework to enable and assist the delivery of Blackpool’s future development requirements. The Council needs to ensure that it has a planning framework based on a robust evidence base that reflects the community and elected members priorities and needs.
- 11.0 Ethical considerations:**
- 11.1 No adverse ethical considerations.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (adopted January 2016)

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 18/2018

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

14.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 6 July 2018 Date approved:

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1 None.

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1 The Executive agreed the recommendations as outlined above namely:

1. To agree the findings and recommendations of the Blackpool Retail, Leisure and Hotel Study (2018) (refer Appendix 6a to the Executive report) which will inform the planning policy framework including Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies and allow publication on the Council's website.
2. To endorse the proposed Local Thresholds for Impact Assessment for use in the determination of retail and leisure planning applications (refer Appendix 6c to the Executive report).

18.2 Date of Decision:

17 July 2018

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

To inform the development of policy in the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document in order to support Blackpool's future regeneration and growth.

19.1 Date Decision published:

18 July 2018

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1 Councillor Cain, in the Chair

Councillors Benson, Jackson, Kirkland, Smith, I Taylor and Mrs Wright

Apologies were received from Councillors Blackburn and Cross who were elsewhere on official Council business.

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1