

NORTH PROMENADE CONSERVATION AREA CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

MARCH 2024

Blackpool Council



North Promenade Conservation Area Management Plan

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North Promenade Conservation Area Management Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 North Promenade Conservation Area was designated in 2018. This management plan has been prepared by Blackpool Council and forms part of the Council's commitment to increasing understanding, appreciation and care of Blackpool's historic built environment. It should be read in conjunction with the North Promenade Conservation Area Appraisal [North Promenade conservation area appraisal \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/conservation-area-appraisal)
- 1.2 The aim of the document is to complement existing national and local policies by providing further advice on the management of North Promenade Conservation Area. The guidance contained within the management plan is intended to ensure that the character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved and enhanced whenever planning applications are being determined or enforcement action is being taken.
- 1.3 The management plan is not meant to be overly prescriptive, or place a heavy financial burden on home and business owners, but it is intended to guide and manage change when it is proposed in order to ensure that it is undertaken sensitively by paying due regard to the area's historic character.
- 1.4 A public consultation was carried out on 4 January to 29 February 2024 to explain the purpose and aims of the conservation area management plan and to invite comments from residents and businesses. A public meeting was held at The Cliffs Hotel on 25 January at 6.30 pm. This is the final document which will now be formally adopted.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 A conservation area is an "area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance", as set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 2.2 Under this legislation, local authorities have a duty to designate such areas and to review them, and to use their planning powers to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of these areas within a framework of managing change with a positive approach. Designation automatically entails control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, strengthens controls over minor development and gives special protection to trees within the area.
- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the historic built environment is an irreplaceable resource, and strategies should be developed through Local Plans so that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

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- 2.4 Policy CS8 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy adopted in 2016 states that development proposals will be supported which respect and draw inspiration from Blackpool's built, social and cultural heritage, and strengthen the existing townscape character created by historic buildings. Proposals will be supported that retain, reuse or convert historic buildings.
- 2.5 Policy DM27 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 gives further policy information for Conservation Areas.
- 2.6 On 16 June 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning decisions are in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030. As the construction industry accounts for around 11% of global carbon emissions, the climate declaration supports the policy in favour of retention and re-use of buildings in conservation areas rather than replacement.

3. Summary of the Character of the Conservation Area

- 3.1 The character of the conservation area can be summarised as an almost complete townscape of large hotels and leisure features developed in the early to mid-20th century, with three listed buildings (Imperial Hotel, Savoy Garage and Cabin Lift) listed colonnades and a number of locally listed buildings including the Genting Casino, and the Savoy and Cliffs Hotels. The buildings are complemented and enhanced by their seafront location, which creates a spatial character of high importance to the character of the conservation area.
- 3.2 The area between Gynn Square and the grade 2 listed Cabin Lift is characterised by large red-brick hotels, of three to five storeys, with dressings either in yellow sandstone or terracotta faience. These buildings are set back from the footway, with large forecourts (now used for parking), although many have modern entrances or sun lounge extensions to the front which detract from the historic character of individual buildings.
- 3.3 Other hotels of positive architectural value include the Boston Hotel, the Chequers Plaza (although this has been altered on all elevations), the Crown Plaza, and the Doric. The terrace of smaller hotels on the southern edge of Gynn Square follows a similar design and materials.
- 3.4 The Grade 2 listed Savoy Garage on King George Avenue, clad with brick and pale buff terracotta, was constructed in 1914-15 as the garage for the Savoy Hydro Hotel.

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Genting Casino, originally a private residence



Savoy Hotel

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Seafront hotels



Locally listed former Sherwood Hotel on the southern edge of Gynn Square

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Savoy Garage

- 3.5 South of Gynn Square the hotels are more varied in design, from the French Renaissance style of the Imperial Hotel to the modern almost Brutalist design of the hotel on the former Derby Baths site, with many smaller hotels in between. The majority of the latter are altered with sun lounges and roof lifts, some more successfully than others.

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Hotel on Derby Baths site



Small hotels to the north of the former Derby Baths site with a variety of sun lounges

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4. Materials and construction

- 4.1 The hotel buildings are primarily of red brick construction, with dressings either in sandstone or terracotta faience. The latter is particularly prominent on buildings constructed or altered in the 1930s such as the Cliffs Hotel. The Cabin Lift is also of red brick with creamy faience details. The Grade 2 listed Savoy Garage on King George Avenue is faced in sandstone ashlar, and the locally listed Genting Casino (originally a private residence) is constructed mainly of sandstone.



Imperial Hotel

- 4.2 Where roofs are visible (many of the hotels have parapets or gables to the roofline) they were originally of Welsh slate although some have been replaced with modern roof coverings.
- 4.3 Pre-cast concrete has been used extensively in the construction of the colonnades, the walkways linking the colonnades and the raised banks of the walkways. The rear wall and supporting twin pillars are also made of pre-cast concrete.

Doors and windows

- 4.4 No examples of historic joinery were found during the research phase for the conservation area, probably due to weathering and the need for insulation and sound proofing in this exposed location. However, buildings have generally retained the original fenestration pattern, although the design of the window frames is varied and often out of character.

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5. Spatial attributes, views and open spaces

- 5.1 The spatial character of the area is derived from a combination of the underlying topography and the pattern of superimposed development, generated by the attractions of the sea itself. The Promenade increases slightly in height, rising from 24 metres to around 28 metres above sea level at its northern end. Views out of, and through, the conservation area make an important contribution to its overall character.
- 5.2 The view along Queen's Promenade, with its straightness at the north end, provides an impressive and far-reaching vista, with the panorama of buildings to the east, and the eye being drawn naturally out to the sea to the west. There are superb views of Morecambe Bay and the distant peaks of the Lake District on a clear day.
- 5.3 In other views along the Promenade, North Pier and the Tower are prominent to the south, and a slight rise in level near Gynn Square provides good views north towards the cabin lift. The Middle Walk, colonnades and Lower Walk contribute significantly to views looking north and out to sea. At Jubilee Gardens there is an open vista looking inland towards Gynn Recreation Ground and Seafield Road beyond. To the west is the sea or beach according to the tides. A number of hotels, including the grade 2 Imperial Hotel, are partially visible to the East.
- 5.4 There are a number of headlands on the Promenade walk, created by the curve of the grade II listed colonnades on the Middle Walk, which add interest to the character and views north and south. Middle Walk features five elegant colonnades linked together, and enclosing a walkway for almost its entire length with pathways leading up to the Promenade. The colonnades shape and dominate the character of Middle Walk. They look particularly impressive when viewed from the southernmost end of the Conservation Area.
- 5.5 Jubilee Gardens, Gynn Recreation Ground and Flagstaff Garden provide large green open public spaces in the centre of the Conservation Area. The Gynn Square roundabout and car park also contribute to the open aspect of this area, although the car park could be enhanced by additional planting around the perimeter. This collection of open spaces, unusual in the generally densely built fabric of Blackpool, provide the setting for the perimeter buildings and allow sweeping views towards the sea, particularly from elevated properties on Seafield Road, Finchley Road and Warbreck Hill Road.

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View south from one of the headlands



Looking north to the colonnades

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View north towards Gynn Square and Savoy Hotel



View north from lower walkway

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View towards the sea from Seafield Road



View across Gynn Recreation Ground from the car park

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- 5.6 The view eastwards from Jubilee Gardens takes in the Gynn Public House and the rows of small hotels encircling the recreation grounds: Finchley Road, Seafield Road, Willshaw Road and the most southerly end of Holmfield Road.
- 5.7 The area behind the large hotels is formed from a grid of east-west streets creating blocks between the Promenade and a range of narrow service streets, running north-south. The service streets have high brick walls to the rear of the buildings and back yards, creating a dense building grain in these areas in contrast to the wide open views elsewhere in the Conservation Area.



Decorative detail on one of the columns of the colonnades



Service lane to the east of the Cliffs Hotel

- 5.8 The Lower Walk forms part of the Lancashire Coastal Way, and consists mainly of a wide pathway framed on one side by artificial cliffs and on the other by the sea or beach according to the tides. Looking to the south, it is possible to see in a sweeping glance a number of significant listed buildings including Blackpool Tower (Grade 1), War Memorial (Grade 2*), North Pier (Grade 2) and a Promenade shelter (Grade 2).

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- 5.9 Lower Walk is lined with continuous wooden benching on the inland side, which gives way to unadorned concrete seating further along. To the north the grade II Cabin Lift and locally listed former boating pool (now a go kart track) are clearly visible in the distance. The pathway is broader, the artificial cliffs bigger and more prominent. There is a colonnade, the only one on Lower Walk.



View towards Cabin lift and former boating pool along Lower Walk

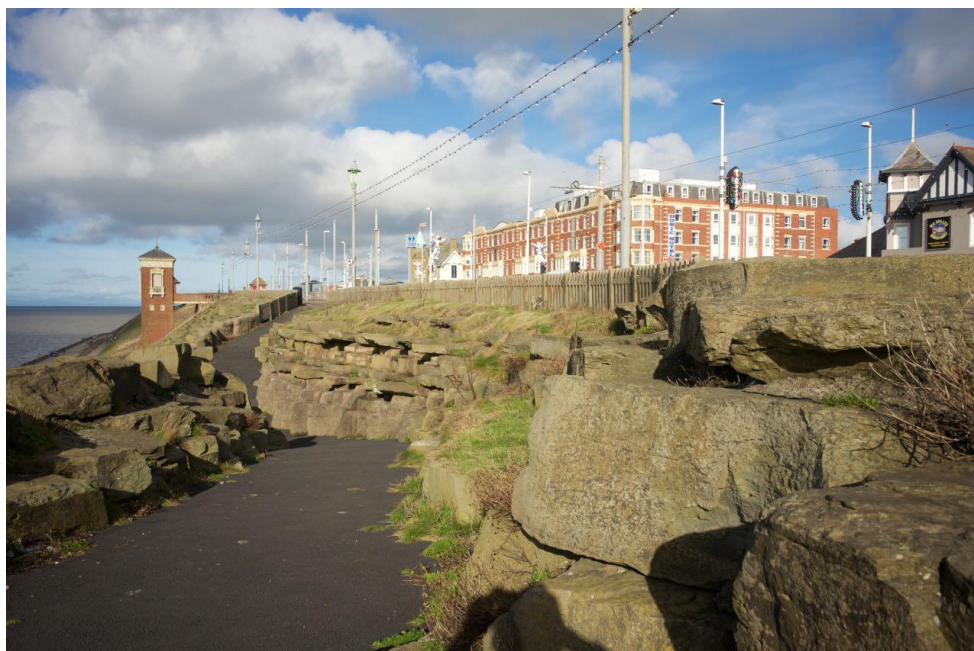


North Prom from the air, c.1930, showing part of the artificial cliffs, the cabin lift, boating pool, Uncle Tom's Cabin pub, and 'The Castle', a private residence

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View towards North Pier from lower walkway headland



View towards cabin lift from cliff path

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View of water tower from the corner of Queen's Promenade/Knowle Avenue

- 5.10 The site of the modern hotel where the Derby Baths once stood contributes to the open space on the Promenade to the south of Gynn Square, contrasting with the densely built nature of the terraces of hotels further south.

6. Boundary treatments

- 6.1 The principal boundaries on North Promenade are the balustrades on the seaward side of the area between the footway and the lower walkway, and the latter and the sea wall. Those to the upper footway are integral to the colonnade scheme, square in section and geometric in design with Neo-Classical elements. The balustrades are divided into bays by chunky brick piers, rendered, and part of the structure of the cantilevered walkway connecting the bowed colonnades.
- 6.2 Those to the lower walkway are probably of a late Victorian or early Edwardian date and are plain with twisted uprights. This type is also used at the south end of the upper walkway, before the colonnades.
- 6.3 Other boundaries include concrete 'post and rail' fencing at the north end of the Promenade, and modern galvanised steel barriers to the roadway and tramway.

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Piers and balustrades to upper walkway



Balustrades to lower walkway

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Concrete fence at north of Promenade

7. Street furniture

- 7.1 Within Jubilee Gardens there are modern steel benches and other street furniture including rubbish bins, and modern signage. A large modern steel archway is located at the entrance to the gardens. There is also a memorial to the emergency services erected in 2013.
- 7.2 There is no historic lighting along North Promenade, with streetlights being tall and modern, and doubling as part of the structural frame during the Illuminations.

8. Roads and footways

- 8.1 The main thoroughfares have tarmac surfaces to both the roadway and tramway. Footways to the main road are also of tarmac with tactile paving to pavement edges and crossing places. The lower Promenade walkway is set with coloured rectangular paviours, and the roadway to the lower walkway is covered with red asphalt.

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Jubilee Gardens



Tall breather pipes

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9. Degree of completeness

- 9.1 The promenade area to the north of Gynn Square has a feel of completeness which is not apparent in other areas of Blackpool. This is due to the early 20th century setting being retained with only minor alterations, and the buildings themselves retain a large amount of their original character and detailing. As with the majority of the buildings in Blackpool, original window casements have been replaced with uPVC double-glazed units, although some attempts have been made to keep to the original fenestration pattern, such as on the Cliffs Hotel.



Windows with faience decoration, Cliffs Hotel

- 9.2 Other features such as the former boating pool, Cabin Lift, artificial cliffs and the lower and middle walkways, along with the wide Promenade itself, are notable survivors, although the Promenade itself is now little more than a through-road from the north to the centre of the town. The expansion of the Illuminations has brought additional clutter to the streetscape, but this should also be seen as an intrinsic part of Blackpool's character.

10. Negative issues and opportunities for enhancement

- 10.1 The Conservation Area benefits from a high level of completeness and is generally in a good state of repair. Conservation area designation seeks to preserve existing character, and encourage enhancement where modern interventions have resulted in a loss of historic character, for example by unsympathetic uPVC replacement windows or the erection of sun lounges.

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- 10.2 Planning applications will be supported which include proposals to retain original architectural features, including boundary walls, whilst improving negative elements such as standard upvc windows.
- 10.3 It is not thought than an article 4 direction is needed to enhance protection of features in the conservation area at the present time. The majority of boundary walls are intact, and proposals to remove walls or widen gateways can be controlled as part of the development management process. Conservation area designation in itself ensures that planning permission is required for demolition, and works affecting front elevations and roof slopes.



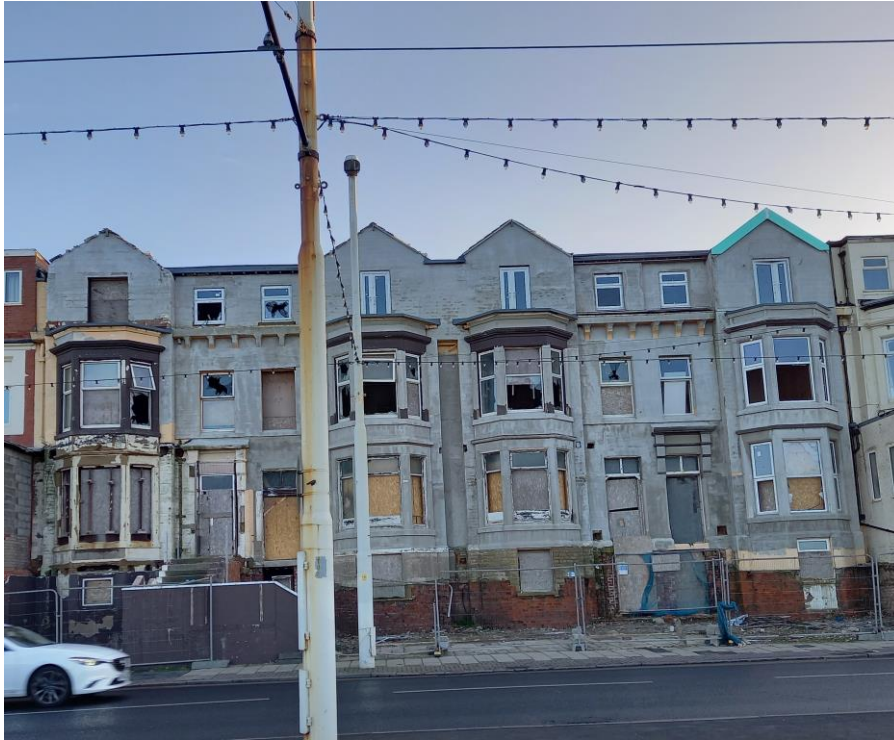
Hacketts Hotel, now demolished

- 10.4 However, one of the main areas of concern in the Conservation Area is the disrepair of unoccupied large properties. There are currently two seafront hotels, namely Sherwood Hotel and the former Queensgate Hotel, which are in various stages of dilapidation. The site of the Hacketts Hotel had to be demolished following a catastrophic fire. The Ambassador Hotel had to be demolished when it had fallen into a dangerous condition.

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- 10.5 As a result of these ongoing losses, the North Promenade Conservation Area has now been placed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register for 2023. This will raise awareness about the vulnerability of these large hotels to risk of loss. Early enforcement action will now be prioritised for the conservation area to ensure a satisfactory resolution to bring any properties into a state of good repair in order to protect the character and quality of the conservation area.
- 10.6 It is considered that viability may be one of the reasons contributing to vacancy, which leads to lack of maintenance and ultimately disrepair and targets for anti-social behaviour. The Holiday Accommodation SPD adopted in 2017 allows for appropriate mixed-use developments that provide high quality holiday accommodation/residential uses in certain Holiday Accommodation Areas. These developments would need to meet high standards of design and deliver clear regeneration benefits.
- 10.7 The guidance makes an allowance for **exceptional circumstances** when a change of use may be considered acceptable. It must be demonstrated through a transparent and robust open book viability appraisal that future holiday accommodation use of the property is no longer viable. Neglect or under investment of a property will not, on its own, be a sufficient reason for allowing non-holiday accommodation uses.
- 10.8 The survey undertaken as part of the conservation area appraisal process also revealed that poor maintenance of infrastructure is an issue which affects the visual amenity of the area, although this is mainly cosmetic. The physical fabric of the colonnades shows some minor signs of deterioration which should be addressed. There are signs of the concrete corroding, though to a minor degree only. The colonnade on the Lower Walk is also in need of repair and redecoration.
- 10.9 The metal benches inside the covered walkways linking the colonnades are badly rusted and in very poor condition, and should be replaced with benches of an appropriate design whenever possible. A rusty container unit parked by the side of the southernmost colonnade also detracts from the visual appearance of the conservation area.
- 10.10 Some of the boundary treatments are also in need of repair and/or repainting, for example the concrete fencing and metal railings.

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Former Queensgate Hotel, 396 – 402 Promenade



Hacketts Hotel

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Railings in need of repainting



Rusting bench

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Broken and corroding concrete fencing



Corroding balustrade

- 10.11 The banked pathways leading up to the colonnades are well maintained with sound tarmac surfaces although the concrete flags covering the raised banks have worked loose in several areas; some have come away completely and require attention.

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- 10.12 The open spaces which make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area should be preserved and enhanced whenever the opportunity arises by removing intrusive features such as superfluous modern street furniture. The open space alongside the former Hilton Hotel site could be enhanced with an improved boundary treatment and some high planting to the rear of the site to soften the boundary between the Conservation Area and Dickson Road. Soft landscaping to the perimeter of the car park at Gynn Square would also enhance this space.
- 10.13 When replacements are being sought for existing modern windows, they should comply with the guidance available on the Council website to ensure that the appearance of the Conservation Area is enhanced [Conservation area window design guidance \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/conservation-area-window-design-guidance) .
- 10.14 Should the opportunity arise, sun lounges should be improved so that their design and appearance better complements their neighbours, or be removed altogether and the historic frontage revealed and restored.
- 10.15 The site of the former Ambassador Hotel is now empty following demolition of the derelict and dangerous building in 2020. Planning permission was granted in September 2022 for the erection of a 7 storey building comprising 26 serviced holiday apartments with landscaping. Filling this gap site with a well-designed replacement is welcome.



Former Ambassador Hotel viewed from Derby Road, now demolished

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Unattractive gap site formerly the Ambassador Hotel

- 10.16 The Grade 2 cabin lift is in a state of disrepair with cracking to the tower, broken windows and rusting doors. The copper roof was replaced a few years ago to remedy water ingress, and repairs were carried out to the faience, but the building continues to deteriorate. A new use needs to be found in order to ensure that the building is saved for future generations.

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Entrance to non-functioning lift from Lower Walk

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Badly rusting security doors to disused toilets under Promenade lift entrance



Plant growth on decorative faience

11. Putting the Management Plan into Practice

- 11.1 The Conservation Area Management Plan will be put into practice by Blackpool Council, which will take responsibility for developing and implementing the Conservation Area Management Plan. The team responsible for advancing the Conservation Area Management Plan will be the Built Heritage and Conservation Team. The relevant Director will take direct responsibility for the Plan. Blackpool Council will deploy its corporate resources to support the delivery of the Management Plan including providing conservation, architecture, planning, enforcement, administrative and financial skills necessary for delivery.

12. A Framework for Design Standards, Design Guidance and Conservation Standards

- 12.1 The Council is committed to achieving a high quality of design and materials in all new development within Conservation Areas.

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12.2 All projects will be required to build on the quality inherent in traditional buildings and ensure that new works pay the same attention to design, detail and materials. They will be required to meet the highest standards possible be they part of repair, reinstatement or new development works.

13. Quality Assurance Measures for Conservation Areas

13.1 The quality of character within the Conservation Area will be maintained using the following measures:

- Encouraging applicants to appoint an Architect to provide a full or partial service in designing any alteration or extension works.
- Promoting the appointment of consultants and specialists with experience of similar types of work.
- The Conservation Officer will provide assistance and guidance to applicants upon request.
- Drawings illustrating the proposals are to be submitted both at pre-application stage and for planning approval. Planning applications should include a heritage statement describing the significance of the conservation area, details of the proposed works, and an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the property and the Conservation Area as a whole.
- Guidance on producing Heritage Statements is available on the Council website at <http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Documents/Heritage-Statement-Guidance.pdf>
- Conservation Area Guidance is available on the website as a resource for applicants.

14. Enforcement Action

14.1 Where necessary the Council will take enforcement action against unauthorised development within the Conservation Area.

14.2 Where necessary the Council will deploy the planning, architectural and legal resources necessary to serve Urgent Works and Repair Notices on property owners who neglect historic buildings.

14.3 Where necessary the Council will apply for Compulsory Purchase Orders and take ownership of property where a mutually acceptable negotiated position cannot be reached.

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- 14.4 Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the Act) provides a Local Planning Authority with the power, in certain circumstances, to take steps requiring land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the amenity (pleasantness) of the area.
- 14.5 The character of a Conservation Area, having been identified as special and worthy of designation, can be seriously affected by unsightly derelict land and buildings and, therefore, S.215 is an effective and straightforward legal mechanism for Councils to use against such elements when they arise.
- 14.6 If it appears that the amenity of the Conservation Area is being adversely affected by the condition of neighbouring land and buildings, the Council may serve a notice on the owner requiring that the situation be remedied. These notices set out the steps that need to be taken, and the time within which they must be carried out. Councils also have powers under S.219 to undertake the clean-up works themselves and to recover the costs from the landowner.

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