

Report to:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
Decision Number:	PH69/2021
Relevant Officer:	Jane Saleh, Head of Planning Strategy
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture
Date of Decision:	23 September 2021

DESIGN CODES

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the submission of an Expression of Interest for phase 2 of the national pilot scheme which seeks to secure funding and additional support from Central Government for the production of a Design Code at the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone; and how this can support further Design Guides and Codes throughout the Borough.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To agree the Expression of Interest for phase 2 of the national pilot scheme for Design Codes at Appendix A and approve its submission to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) now states that local authorities should prepare design codes or guides consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

The National Model Design Code was launched by the Government in 2020. This is designed to be read alongside the National Design Guide, and the Government's Planning Practice Guidance. Phase 2 of the pilot scheme for the National Model Design Code invites expressions of interest for design codes covering a range of scales and development types.

Given the short timescales involved in submitting a bid and implementing a design code which is around a year, it is considered that the Enterprise Zone provides the best opportunity for Blackpool to engage with the pilot scheme as the Council will have the

support of consultants who are currently responsible for assisting in the implementation of the Enterprise Zone Masterplan.

Should the Expression of Interest be successful elements of the design code for the Enterprise Zone and the process undertaken can be used to inform design codes for other areas of the Borough, including for residential development. Design codes and design guides should be developed across the Borough as advised in national policy, guiding development to secure higher standards of design and helping meet the Council's net zero carbon ambitions, setting out clear expectations for developers and simplifying the decision making progress on planning applications.

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| 3.2 | Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? | No |
| 3.3 | Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? | Yes |

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

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| 4.1 | There is already a commitment in the EZ Masterplan to deliver a high standard of design and this has been embedded in the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 Policy DM8. Both the Masterplan and the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 have been subject to public consultation. |
| 4.2 | The National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences. The Design Pilot will provide the opportunity for the Council to obtain first hand support and advice from the Government's Office of Place to get a clearer understanding of the government's requirements in relation to developing design guides and codes. |
| 4.3 | Not submitting an EOI means we miss the opportunity to be chosen to participate and the benefits from the support and guidance that would be provided which may mean that the length of time needed to develop new design guides and codes for Blackpool could be extended and have an impact on increased cost. |

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priorities are both:

- “The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”
- “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”

6.0 Background information

6.1 Changes made to the National Planning Policy Framework in July 2021 strengthen national policy on design. As well as stating that local authorities should produce design guides and codes, it states that development that is not well designed should be refused. This is especially where development fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

6.2 National guidance states that significant weight should be given to decisions that reflect local and national design guidance and/or outstanding or innovative designs that promote high levels of sustainability and help raise the standard of design in an area. However in developing design codes or design guides for Blackpool regard will need to be had to the impact on the viability of development.

6.3 A design code is a set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. Whilst these are more likely to work better on a site specific basis, prepared in conjunction with a developer, they can be applied to a range of settings including planning for infill sites. The level of detail in a design code can be determined based on local circumstances. The Government have currently run a first phase of pilot schemes for Design Codes to test the National Model Design Code, the phase two pilot is to develop best practice design codes and processes that can serve as exemplars to others in the creation of local design codes.

6.4 A design guide is prepared following guidance in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. These can provide guidance to developers and set expectations of what standards of design we can expect to see, drawing on local character to add further local detail to the national design guide. These can be prepared for the whole borough, or for specific areas. Further information on Government guidance and design codes can be found at the following link - [National Model Design Code - GOV.UK](#)

6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix A: Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone – Phase 2 Design Code Expression of Interest submission

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The production of the Design Code for Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone is dependent on the outcome of the Expression of Interest bid and securing funding from Central Government. There is already a commitment to secure consultancy support for the production of a Design Framework for the Enterprise Zone funded from the Enterprise Zone budget. Submitting the Expression of Interest does not cause additional financial burden on the planning budget. If the Expression of Interest is successful additional funding will be secured from Government to assist in developing the design code.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 Design codes and guides will be a material consideration when determining planning applications for both officers and members of the Planning Committee.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Not submitting an Expression of Interest removes the opportunity if successful to benefit from government support in developing design guides and codes. This could then lead to an extended time frame in developing such documents which would incur greater costs and delay approval and implementation.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 No adverse equalities issues

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 Well-designed places and buildings conserve natural resources including buildings, land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change by being energy efficient and minimising carbon emissions to assist in meeting net zero targets.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 If the bid is successful consultation on emerging design codes and design guides is a requirement of the pilot.

14.0 Background papers:

[Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies \(Publication Version\)](#)

[Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Masterplan 2018](#)

[National Model Design Code - GOV.UK](#)

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? No

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:

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

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

16.0 Call-in information:

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

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

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed:

Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1 None.

19.0 Executive decision:

19.1 The Leader of the Council agreed the recommendation as outlined above namely:

To agree the Expression of Interest for phase 2 of the national pilot scheme for Design Codes at Appendix A and approve its submission to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

20.0 Date of Decision:

20.1 23 September 2021

21.0 Reason(s) for decision:

21.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) now states that local authorities should prepare design codes or guides consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

The National Model Design Code was launched by the Government in 2020. This is designed to be read alongside the National Design Guide, and the Government's Planning Practice Guidance. Phase 2 of the pilot scheme for the National Model Design Code invites expressions of interest for design codes covering a range of scales and development types.

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22.0 Date Decision published:

22.1 23 September 2021

23.0 Executive Members in attendance:

23.1

24.0 Call-in:

24.0

25.0 Notes:

25.1