

Notice of:	EXECUTIVE
Decision Number:	EX35/2022
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Tourism, Arts and Culture
Date of Meeting:	5 September 2022

THE ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR THE MULTIVERSITY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the approach to assembling a site for the development of the Multiversity on land adjacent to the Talbot Gateway Central Business District.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 To agree, in principle, that if other options are exhausted then the Council would consider the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to assemble the site outlined in Appendix 8a, to the Executive report.

2.2 To authorise the Director of Communications and Regeneration to pursue detailed negotiations with interested parties as necessary.

2.3 To delegate authority to the Director of Communications and Regeneration to authorise expenditure and contracts pursuant to (2.2).

2.4 To instruct relevant Officers to commence all necessary preparatory works for the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order to support the site assembly of the land required for the third phase of the regeneration and any associated road improvements and road closures

2.5 That Officers be required to bring a further report to the Executive to authorise the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order should such powers be required.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To enable the development of the 1.18 Ha Multiversity on a site adjacent to the Talbot Gateway Central Business District.

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:

4.1 None as the Council has already been awarded Town Deal funding by Government for the assembly of the site.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool"

6.0 Background information

6.1 Property Matters

At the Executive meeting of 16th November 2020 (EX48/2020), it was agreed to progress with Heads of Terms for the Towns Funding (Town Deal) whereby funding was being sought for allocation amongst 7 schemes including the Multiversity

At the Executive meeting on 22 March 2021 (EX16/2021) an update was provided which confirmed that of the £39.5m funding bid, £9m was allocated to the Multiversity project.

At the Executive meeting on 6 December 2021 (EX63/2021), it was confirmed that the Multiversity was one of two projects which, subject to final Government sign off, required an agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) with Blackpool and the Fylde College in order to make further progress with it.

At the Executive meeting on 25 April 2022 (EX 19/22) approval was given to the signing of the Multiversity Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Blackpool & The Fylde College regarding the preparation of a business case to secure funding for the construction of the Multiversity noting that this was a condition of the Town Funds £9m scheme approval. The same report also noted that the Multiversity was to be a priority funding bid for Levelling Up Found Round 2.

In August 2022 a Levelling Up Fund bid was made for £40m towards the construction of The Multiversity (see separate report on Levelling Up Fund elsewhere on this agenda)

Thus, subject to securing funding for the construction of the Multiversity it has been agreed in principle that Blackpool & Fylde College will relocate the University Centre Blackpool Campus from Park Road to a new 1.18 Ha site, which is close to Blackpool North Railway Station and the town centre and will initially accommodate c2,300 students.

The site identified is bounded to the north by George St, to the east by Grosvenor St, to the South by Milbourne Street and to the west by Cookson Street. For identification purposes it is shown edged red on Plan 1 at Appendix 8a

Since the approval (through the Town Deal) for the costs of assembling the site, Council officers have been in contact with the business properties fronting Cookson Street and some other properties in the proposed site and negotiations are underway. In order to properly identify all owners and occupiers, however, it will be necessary to issue notices under section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to make all parties concerned aware that the Council is considering the future planning of the area and the possible use of its Compulsory Purchase Powers.

Once the responses are available officers will make contact with the parties within the area likely to be the subject of any future Compulsory Purchase Order and, where possible, negotiations will commence.

Whilst the Council will pursue discussions with the interested landowners following meetings with owners/occupiers it is clear that the acquisition by agreement of all of the subject land may not be possible within a realistic timeframe or at all. Consequently, the Council has to consider whether it would support securing the whole of the area required for the regeneration by utilising Compulsory Purchase powers in effecting site assembly. This is a normal process in large regeneration projects.

6.2 Compulsory Purchase Powers

There are a range of powers which the Council can use to facilitate land assembly. In the circumstances the powers under Section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act are likely to be appropriate. This allows the Council to acquire land which is 'suitable for and required in order to secure the carrying out of development, re-development or improvement', or is required for the 'proper planning of an area'.

The Council recognises that it would be premature to make a Compulsory Purchase Order at this time. However, the government guidance acknowledges that "if an acquiring authority waits for negotiations to break down before starting the compulsory purchase process, valuable time will be lost" and that "undertaking negotiations in parallel with preparing and making a compulsory purchase order can help to build a good working relationship with those whose interests are affected by showing that the authority is willing to be open and treat their concerns with respect." Consequently, it is proposed that a further report be submitted to the Executive to authorise a Compulsory Purchase Order should the negotiations for the remaining interests not be concluded in a timely manner and upon the Council being satisfied that there is a compelling case in the public interest to do so.

The Director of Communications and Regeneration accepts that the Executive will need to be satisfied that all reasonable attempts have been made to assemble the site through negotiation as compulsory purchase should be used as a 'last resort'. The Council has been progressing voluntary acquisitions with owners and will continue to do so.

6.3 Conclusions

Should the Executive be prepared to agree, in principle, to making a Compulsory Purchase Order, a further detailed report would be submitted if reasonable attempts to assemble the site through negotiation in a timely manner are unsuccessful.

An 'in-principle' decision to make a Compulsory Purchase Order would create greater certainty amongst stakeholders that the site will be assembled in a timely manner to enable the scheme to be implemented. This will enable such stakeholders to plan their business accordingly. It will similarly reaffirm the Council's support for the scheme.

6.4 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 8a- Reference plan -

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The final terms of each acquisition will be subject to valuation and negotiation. The budget for the acquisitions and demolition of property has been agreed as part of the Town Deal allocation for the Multiversity Site assembly.

8.2 Should the costs of acquisition exceed the budget provided in the Town Deal allocation, these costs are likely to be borne by Blackpool Council. If this situation arose a further report would be submitted to the Executive and options considered.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None at this time.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None at this time.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None at this time.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None at this time.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Growth and Prosperity Board, Head of Legal Services, the Blackpool and the Fylde College (B&FC), Lancaster University and internal stakeholders of Blackpool Council and B&FC.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 EX 48/2020 – Blackpool Town Deal Heads of Terms
EX 16/2021 – Blackpool Town Deal Update
EX63/2021 - Blackpool Town Deal Update
EX19/2022 - Levelling Up Fund Round 2

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 14/2022

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: 25 August 2022 Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1 None

19.0 Summary of Discussion:

19.1 Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration, introduced the item. Mr Cavill asked members to note that an 'in-principle' decision to make a Compulsory Purchase Order would create greater certainty amongst stakeholders that the site would be assembled in a timely manner to enable the scheme to be implemented. The approval of recommendations would therefore reaffirm the Council's support for the scheme and enable stakeholders to plan their business accordingly.

The Executive, while endorsing the recommendations, expressed concerns that not all owners and residents of the area were aware of the Council's intention. It asked officers to ensure that further steps were taken to raise awareness in the area to minimise uncertainty and miscommunication.

20.0 Executive decision:

20.1 The Executive agreed the recommendations as outlined above namely:

1. To agree, in principle, that if other options are exhausted then the Council would consider the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to assemble the site outlined in Appendix 8a, to the Executive report.
2. To authorise the Director of Communications and Regeneration to pursue detailed negotiations with interested parties as necessary.
3. To delegate authority to the Director of Communications and Regeneration to authorise expenditure and contracts pursuant to resolution 2.
4. To instruct relevant Officers to commence all necessary preparatory works for the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order to support the site assembly of the land required for the third phase of the regeneration and any associated road improvements and road closures

5. That Officers be required to bring a further report to the Executive to authorise the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order should such powers be required.

21.0 Date of Decision:

21.1 5 September 2022

22.0 Reason(s) for decision:

22.1 To enable the development of the 1.18 Ha Multiversity on a site adjacent to the Talbot Gateway Central Business District.

23.0 Date Decision published:

23.1 6 September 2022

24.0 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

24.1 The Executive noted that there were no alternative option as the Council has already been awarded Town Deal funding by Government for the assembly of the site.

25.0 Executive Members in attendance:

25.1 Councillor L Williams, in the Chair

Councillors Brookes, Campbell, Farrell, Hobson Hugo, Smith and Taylor

26.0 Call-in:

26.1

27.0 Notes:

27.1 The following non-Executive member was in attendance: Councillor Hunter