

Officer Report to Committee

Application ref:	22/0496
Ward:	Bloomfield
Application type:	Full
Location: Blackpool Football Club, Bloomfield Road	
Proposal:	Provision of three new exits to south-east corner of stadium
Recommendation:	Approve
Recommendation Summary:	The proposed egress points would enable home and away fans to leave the ground separately, thereby facilitating better crowd management and reducing anti-social behaviour.
Meeting date: 15 November 2022	
Reason for bringing to Committee:	General public interest.
Case officer:	Susan Parker
Case officer contact:	01253 476228

1.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application relates to the Blackpool Football Club ground on Bloomfield Road. In particular it relates to the south-eastern corner of the stadium where the back Henry Street alleyway running north-south meets the alleyway running east-west and linking the alleyway into Henry Street. The alleyway is currently gated and there is no access from it directly onto Bloomfield Road.
- 1.2 Henry Street is characterised by terraced residential properties with industrial uses at the northern end and the football club car park and public car parks beyond to the northeast. There is a club building at the southern end of Henry Street adjacent to the stadium with a commercial unit on the opposite side of the road.
- 1.2 The site falls within the defined Inner Area and the airport safeguarding zone. Otherwise no specific designations or constraints apply.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks permission for the creation of three egress points in the eastern elevation of the building towards the southeast corner of the stadium. These egress points would give access from an internal spectator concourse onto the public alleyway. It is proposed that 'away' fans would then be directed along the east-west alleyway onto Henry Street and then north to the public car parks. The additional exits will enable fans to leave the ground more quickly and will enable 'home' and 'away' fans to be kept separate from one another after a match.
- 2.2 The application has been supported by:
- Planning Statement

- Design and Access Statement
- Management Plan

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The stadium has an extensive planning history but no previous applications are considered to be directly relevant to this proposal.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY/GUIDANCE/LEGISLATION

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework was adopted in July 2021. It sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The following sections are most relevant to this application:

- Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities.
- Section 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport.
- Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places.

4.2 National Planning Practice Guidance

4.2.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance expands upon and offers clarity on the points of policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

4.3 Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 (Core Strategy)

4.3.1 The Core Strategy was adopted in January 2016. The following policies are most relevant to this application:

- CS5 Connectivity
- CS7 Quality of Design
- CS12 Sustainable Neighbourhoods

4.4 Blackpool Local Plan 2011-2016 (Local Plan)

4.4.1 The Blackpool Local Plan was adopted in June 2006. A number of policies in the Local Plan have now been superseded by policies in the Core Strategy but others have been saved until the Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies has been adopted. The following saved policies are most relevant to this application:

- LQ1 Lifting the Quality of Design
- LQ5 Public Realm Design
- LQ14 Extensions and Alterations
- BH3 Residential and Visitor Amenity
- BH4 Public Health and Safety
- AS1 General Development Requirements (Access and Transport)
- AS7 Aerodrome Safeguarding

4.5 Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations & Development Management Policies (Part 2)

4.5.1 The Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 (Part 2) was the subject of independent Examination in Public in December 2021. The Inspector has now issued his comments and the Council has recently consulted on minor modifications. It is anticipated that Part 2 will be adopted in Spring 2023. As such, significant weight can be attached to the emerging policies in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The following emerging policies in Part 2 are most relevant to this application:

- DM17 Design Principles
- DM20 Extensions and Alterations
- DM41 Transport Requirements for New Development
- DM42 Aerodrome Safeguarding

4.6 Other Relevant documents, guidance and legislation

4.6.1 National Model Design Code (July 2021) provides guidance to promote successful design and expands on the ten characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide.

4.6.3 National Design Guide (January 2021) recognises the importance of good design and identifies the ten characteristics that make up good design to achieve high-quality places and buildings. The guide articulates that a well-designed place is made up of its character, its contribution to a sense of community, and its ability to address the environmental issues affecting climate.

5.0 CONSULTEE RESPONSES

5.1 **Health and Safety Executive – Fire:** the building in question does not appear to fall under the remit of the relevant fire safety legislation and therefore no comments are offered.

5.2 **Blackpool International Airport:** no response received in time for inclusion in this report. Any response that is received in advance of the meeting will be reported through the update note.

5.3 **Community Safety Manager:** no response received in time for inclusion in this report. Any response that is received in advance of the meeting will be reported through the update note.

5.4 **Environmental Protection (Amenity):** no response received in time for inclusion in this report. Any response that is received in advance of the meeting will be reported through the update note.

5.5 **Police Architectural Liaison Officer:** this proposal has been discussed with the football club. The fencing to the alleyway should be as high as the neighbouring fence or 1.8m. A paladin weld-mesh would be appropriate with a framed gate employing galvanised adjustable hinges and fixings mounted behind the attack face. Fixings should be galvanised coach bolt design where the gates open out and the hinges and brace are mounted on the attack face. Locks to gold sold secure standard should be fitted. The existing low wall should be removed to make it harder for the fence to be scaled. CCTV and lighting to appropriate standards should be provided and landscaping should not hinder their operation. All alleyways surrounding should be cleared of debris and maintained as such during the season to prevent items being thrown.

5.6 **Head of Highways and Traffic Management Services:** The back street to the north of the proposed gates is adopted and no fans should be able to access this area. The back street running south from the gates is not adopted and ends at a wooden fence. It is unclear who is responsible for this section of un-adopted alleyway. The back street running east from the gates to Henry Street is adopted. It is usually blocked by the vans and customers of a tyre company operating to the rear (2a) of 2 Henry Street. The areas in question seem to be adequately lit and have football club CCTV. Clarification is required as to the fencing that will be in situ around the gates and which areas the football club would have responsibility for. If the alleyway leading to Henry Street is to be used by significant numbers of pedestrians then the surface will need to be upgraded and road markings refreshed.
Officer response – fencing details have since been provided and the extent of the highway is known.

5.7 **Head of Estates and Asset Management:** no response received in time for inclusion in this report. Any response that is received in advance of the meeting will be reported through the update note.

6.0 **REPRESENTATIONS**

6.1 Press notice published: N/A.

6.2 Site notice displayed: 19 August 2022.

6.3 Neighbours notified: 18 August 2022.

6.4 A representation has been received from the occupant of the building to the rear of 1 Henry Street. This notes the former existence of a walkway between the ground and the arcade building. Football fans have been a source of anti-social behaviour on match days. The proposal is considered to be unsafe and concern is raised over the potential for intimidation and fear amongst residents who include families with children, older people and those with disabilities.

7.0 **ASSESSMENT**

7.1 **Principle**

7.1.1 There are no planning policies that would preclude this proposal in principle.

7.2 **Amenity**

7.2.1 The information submitted states that 23 English Football League Championship games would be played at Bloomfield Road each season. Up to 4 Football Association Cup fixtures could also be held at the ground along with up to 6 English Football League Cup games. This gives a maximum total of 33 matches in a season. Games traditionally commence at 15:00 on a Saturday on a fortnightly basis, with some potential for games to start at 12:30 or 17:30 if televised. Mid-week games typically kick-off at 19:45 and would generally finish a few minutes after 21:30. Extra time or penalties could extend this for cup games but this would be a relatively rare occurrence.

7.2.2 The south-east corner already provides a point of entry for fans with four turnstiles accessed directly from Bloomfield Road. This arrangement would not change.

- 7.2.3 A Management Plan has been submitted with the application which explains that the concourse areas and access/egress points are staffed by stewards. Staff will ensure that the existing alley gates are closed before fans are permitted to egress. The area is covered by CCTV and the egress will be supervised by stadium stewards and, where necessary, by the police. Emergency phones are available for use by staff or supporters and there is usually a police presence within the stadium on match days.
- 7.2.4 A letter from the local Police Superintendent has been submitted in support of the application. This states that the ingress and egress of fans is a critical feature of safe event management. It notes that the crossover of 'home' and 'away' fans has and can be problematic. The new exit points proposed would allow faster egress and dispersal of fans whilst maintaining separation, and this is supported by the Police.
- 7.2.5 Appropriate equipment and procedures are in place in the event of a fire and the egress points would also serve as an additional emergency exit.
- 7.2.6 A condition could be imposed on any permission granted to require that the existing alley gates are closed prior to first egress and to ensure that the area is covered by CCTV. Subject to this condition, it is considered that the proposal would improve safety at the ground and reduce instances of anti-social behaviour to public benefit.
- 7.2.7 It is appreciated that the egress of a significant number of fans along Henry Street could be a source of noise and disturbance for residents. However, given the proximity of the street to the stadium, it is highly likely that residents are already subject to significant noise levels on match days. The exit points are proposed to allow for faster egress and dispersal of fans meaning that any increased disturbance would be relatively short lived. It is not considered that any additional measures could be taken to reduce noise levels. Nevertheless, given the nature of the site and location, no unacceptable impacts on residential amenity over and above the existing situation are anticipated.
- 7.2.8 In terms of local resident security, the supervision of the egress points by staff and the police as appropriate, along with the condition to require alley gate closure and CCTV coverage, should ensure adequate security.

7.3 Visual Impact

- 7.3.1 The new egress points would be very functional in appearance and, given their size in relation to the overall scale of the stadium, would have negligible visual impact. A condition could be imposed on any permission granted to ensure that the doors are grey steel, as specified in the application form, to tie-in suitably with the wider elevation.

7.4 Access, highway safety and parking

- 7.4.1 Since first submission, additional information has been provided to detail the boundary treatments in place around the stadium and the alleyway off Henry Street. Fans would leave the stadium using the two new doors in the eastern elevation. It has been clarified that the entrance door in the southern elevation would only be used for egress in emergency situations.
- 7.4.2 The two egress doors to the east would release fans onto the alleyway running east to west between the stadium and Henry Street. An existing bin store to the south of these doors

would prevent fans from accessing Bloomfield Road. Equally an existing alley-gate would prevent fans from travelling north along back Henry Street. Fans would therefore be channelled east out onto Henry Street. The existing boundary treatments to the north of this alleyway are adequate to ensure security and prevent access to property. To the south a 1.8 metre high weld-mesh fence has recently been erected around the site of the former casino. This fence has been erected without planning permission but is nevertheless considered to be acceptable. The Council's Planning Enforcement team has confirmed that no action will be pursued against the installation of this fence. As such, the property to the south would be equally protected against unauthorised access.

- 7.4.3 The submitted management plan notes that fans would be directed by stewards and the Police as required northwards along Henry Street to the main car parking areas. The alleyway leading to Henry Street would need to have its surface upgraded and its line-markings renewed. A condition is proposed to require a minimum standard of surface works to be carried out prior to first use with full resurfacing required within 2 years. This would avoid any undue delay to the club making use of the new egress arrangements whilst protecting pedestrian safety in both the short and long term. CCTV and lighting provision are considered to be acceptable. The works would not affect traffic generation or parking demand.
- 7.4.4 In light of the above and subject to the imposition of an appropriate condition to secure the highway works, the scheme is considered to be acceptable in highway terms.

7.5 Other Issues

- 7.5.1 The proposal would not impact upon drainage or flood risk. Biodiversity would not be affected and no ecological enhancement is considered necessary. The scheme would not impact upon air, land or water quality and would not be at undue risk from contamination or pollution.
- 7.5.2 The application has been considered in the context of the Council's general duty in all its functions to have regard to community safety issues as required by section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended).
- 7.5.3 Under Article 8 and Article 1 of the first protocol to the Convention on Human Rights, a person is entitled to the right to respect for private and family life, and the peaceful enjoyment of his/her property. However, these rights are qualified in that they must be set against the general interest and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This application does not raise any specific human rights issues.
- 7.5.4 Through the assessment of this application, Blackpool Council as a public authority has had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty ("PSED") under s.149 of the Equality Act and the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and to foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The application is not considered to raise any inequality issues.

7.6 Sustainability and planning balance appraisal

- 7.6.1 Sustainability comprises economic, environmental and social components.
- 7.6.2 Economically the scheme would have negligible impact.

- 7.6.3 Environmentally the scheme would have negligible impact.
- 7.6.4 Socially, the potential impact of the scheme on residential amenity could be satisfactorily managed. No loss of light or privacy would result. Management of the use of the egress points should ensure adequate security although fear of crime is recognised as being a concern for residents. No impacts on highway safety are anticipated.
- 7.6.5 In terms of planning balance, the development proposed is considered to constitute sustainable development in terms of the environmental and social components. No other material planning considerations have been identified that would outweigh this view.

8.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 BLACKPOOL COUNCIL PLAN 2019-2024

- 9.1 The Council Plan sets out two priorities. The first is 'the economy: maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool', and the second is 'communities: creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.
- 9.2 This application is considered to be broadly in accordance with the second priority as it would improve safety and crowd management at the stadium to general public benefit.

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 On balance, the scheme is considered to be acceptable. The management arrangements proposed would sufficiently safeguard residential amenity and the additional egress points would enable the segregation of fans generating wider public benefit through an overall reduction in anti-social behaviour.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development shall be carried out, except where modified by the conditions attached to this permission, in accordance with the planning application received by the Local Planning Authority including the following plans and information:

Location plan recorded as received by the Council on 19 Oct 2022
Proposed site layout plan ref. BPM-AFL-00-00-DR-A-20193 Rev P04
Proposed spectator flows plan ref. BPM-AFL-00-00-DR-A-01192 Rev P04
Proposed elevations drawing ref. BPM-AFL-00-00-DR-A-01191 Rev P06

The development shall thereafter be retained and maintained in accordance with these approved details.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and so the Local Planning Authority can be satisfied as to the details of the permission.

- 3 Before the development hereby approved is first brought into use, the alleyway between the stadium and Henry Street shall be resurfaced and any line-markings repainted between the existing alley-gates to the north on Back Henry Street, the extent of the private curtilage to the south and Henry Street to the east.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy AS1 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016. This scheme must be agreed prior to the commencement of works on site in order to ensure that appropriate access is available once the scheme is operational.

- 4 (a) Before the egress points hereby approved are first brought into use the surface of the alleyway between the stadium, the carriageway of Henry Street, the existing alley-gates to the north on Back Henry Street and the extent of the private curtilage to the south shall be made safe and good for pedestrian use and the road markings refreshed; and
- (b) Within 2 years of the date of this permission either the alleyway between the stadium, the carriageway of Henry Street, the existing alley-gates to the north on Back Henry Street and the extent of the private curtilage to the south shall be resurfaced and any line-markings repainted or the use of the egress points hereby permitted shall cease.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy AS1 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016.

- 5 The external materials to be used on the external alterations hereby approved shall be as specified on the application form recorded as received by the Council on 10 Aug 2022 unless otherwise first submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any above ground construction.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the site and streetscene in accordance with Policy CS7 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policies LQ1 and LQ4 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016.