



DE POL

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS
established 1986

PLANNING STATEMENT

**Imperial House, Imperial Buildings,
Dickson Road, Blackpool**

Description:

Change of use of building to a vocational training and education centre

Applicant:

Hexagon Care Services

Date:

March 2021



Planning Statement

Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	2
2 Site Description & Planning History	3
3 Application Proposals	4
4 Planning Policy Context	5
5 Planning Judgement	6
6 Conclusion	8



Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1. De Pol Associates Ltd are retained by Hexagon Care Services to prepare a Planning Statement in support of the change of use of Imperial House, Imperial Buildings, Dickson Road, Blackpool to a vocational training and educational centre for young people.
- 1.2. This Statement provides a description of the proposed development together with an appraisal of the planning merits of the scheme in the context of relevant planning policies / guidance.
- 1.3. For reasons identified in this Statement it is considered that based on planning policy and material considerations the application proposals represent appropriate development and that full planning permission ought to be granted.



Chapter 2

Site Description and Planning History

- 2.1. The application site comprises an existing workshop/warehouse unit incorporating a full cover mezzanine floor with a total floor area of 613sqm. The premises forms part of a commercial L-shape terrace block which includes a tyre fitters, MOT Test Station and repair garage and car wash. The premises are located in the urban area of Blackpool north of the town centre on the east side of Dickson Road.
- 2.2. The subject property is brick facing at ground floor with large, glazed windows and shutter door providing access to the unit. At the upper level the building is finished in grey profile metal cladding and double-glazed window units. Vehicular access to site is off Dickson Road with car parking set immediately outside of the unit. The tarmacked external area is shared for means of access with the adjoining uses.
- 2.3. Internally the premises have a large open warehouse space at ground floor together with a reception area and smaller rooms all accessed off of the main warehouse. A staircase to the rear of the unit provides direct access to a mezzanine floor which is separated into six offices together with a staff room and toilets.
- 2.4. The property is currently vacant and is being marketed for let or sale. The building was previously occupied by a decorating merchants who stored and dealt in decorating products, primarily to the trade.
- 2.5. In terms of planning history planning permission was originally granted in 1981 under reference 4/81/822 for the construction of the three workshops on the site, a car showroom and petrol filling station. Planning permission was then granted in April 1983 to change the use of the units to car valeting, DIY equipment hire and warehouse referenced 4/83/0131.
- 2.6. In 2002 planning permission was granted for the use of the application premises for the production of printed materials with ancillary sales area under reference 01/0922.



Chapter 3

Application Proposals

- 3.1. The applicant, Hexagon Care Services (HCS), is an established independent care provider operating nationally, delivering a wide range of care services for young people. Part of this service is providing education and training facilities for young people under the age of 18.
- 3.2. HCS operate an existing school in Blackpool – Spen Brook School at Hawes Side Lane with capacity for 24 Children. The application proposal is designed to supplement this existing school and act as a satellite facility which will house the school’s vocational education team to deliver vocational education and training classes. This proposal will not expand or make provision for additional pupils to attend Spen Brook, it will supplement it providing opportunities for training and education which is not possible at the existing school.
- 3.3. The proposal will provide vocational education and training in four key areas, although this may change or expand depending on student or staffing requirements:
- Five BTEC Construction disciplines
 - Painting and decorating;
 - Plumbing;
 - Bricklaying
 - Joinery
 - plastering
 - BTEC Introduction to Hair and Beauty.
- 3.4. The proposed use will not require any internal or external alterations to the building with the various classes making use of the existing spaces within the building. The front room at the first floor would be dedicated to the teaching of hair and beauty whilst the other rooms would be used interchangeably as required.
- 3.5. Each of the classes will be run by semi-skilled tradespeople whilst the centre itself would be run by a manager supplemented by three staff who oversee operations on site.



Chapter 4

Planning Policy Context

- 4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the Blackpool Local Plan Core Strategy adopted January 2016 and the saved policies of the Blackpool Local Plan adopted 2006. A Local Plan Part 2 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies is currently under consultation, it is at a relatively early stage and as such is not considered relevant to this application. Further material considerations to be balanced against the Development Plan include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Blackpool Core Strategy

- 4.3. The Blackpool Core Strategy was adopted in January 2016. The policies relevant to this application, which are considered in this Statement, comprise the following:
- CS3 – Economic Development and Employment; and
 - CS15 – Health and Education

Blackpool Local Plan (2006)

- 4.4. A number of the policies in the Blackpool Local Plan, adopted 2006 have been saved. Of relevance to this application is policy DE4 – Outside the defined industrial/business estates.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.5. Published in February 2019 the NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The NPPF must be given significant weight in the consideration of planning decisions. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the planning authority should grant permission for development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 4.8. On 6 March 2014 the government launched its Planning Practice Guidance. The web-based resource brings together a series of English planning guidance documents into a new format and assists in the interpretation and practice of national planning policies as outlined in the NPPF.



Chapter 5

Planning Judgement

- 5.1 The application proposal seeks the change of use of the existing premises from a commercial use to that of an education and training facility. The proposal will be a satellite facility to the existing Spen Brook School also operated by the applicant. The application premises will specifically provide practical and 'hands on' teaching which is not possible at the existing school.
- 5.2 Policy DE4 of the saved Blackpool Local Plan advises that development of existing business premises will be permitted where there is a wider community benefit which outweighs the loss of business floorspace. In this instance it is considered that there are wider community benefits which outweigh the loss of commercial space and these are outlined below.
- 5.3 The application proposal will provide education and training to young people who will then go on to secure qualifications and ultimately roles in the community in a related trade or profession. The training provided at the application premises will provide young people with qualifications which will skill them for work contribute towards the local economy. Training young people also provides a skilled workforce which will help attract business to Blackpool and set up new operations. Whilst the proposal would result in a loss of commercial floorspace the premises will continue to contribute towards the economy training young people to take on roles and jobs as they become available.
- 5.4 The nature of the proposed use means that there is a requirement for the proposal to be set in a commercial location. The education and training to be provided is commensurate with the surrounding uses to avoid a negative impact on neighbours. It is also important, from a training perspective, that students learn in an environment that reflects real world scenarios. The application premises provide this learning context which is simply not achievable in a traditional educational environment.
- 5.5 Whilst the policy DE4 seeks to protect existing business/industrial premises, the application site was previously used a painting and decorating trade use. The previous use of the building for the sale of decorating equipment, would not represent a strict employment or business use , as such any impact on employment would be limited. Furthermore, staff will be employed in management and teaching at the premises and as such any impact, in terms of loss of jobs, is likely to be negligible when comparing the proposed and previous uses.



- 5.6 Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy acknowledges a need to develop a skills agenda for local people to improve opportunities and retain skilled people in the town. Policy CS15 also seeks to support the provision of new and improved higher and further education facilities. This application proposal garners direct support from both of these policies equipping local people with skills through the provision of a new educational facility.
- 5.7 Paragraph 80 of NPPF considers the economy in a wider sense than policy DE4. It requires planning decisions to help create conditions in which businesses can invest adapt and expand. It advises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. The application proposal is supported by this as it supports the economy by equipping young people to take up jobs and contribute to wider economic prosperity.
- 5.8 NPPF paragraph 94 specifically states that local authorities should take a positive and proactive approach to development which will widen choice in education. This includes giving great weight to create, alter or expand schools. Clearly NPPF supports and promotes the provision of expanded educational facilities as per the application proposal.
- 5.9 In terms of specific matters it is not considered that the application proposal will have any implications for the amenity of nearby residents. The premises forms part of an existing commercial estate and would operate within the existing restriction of 7:00 – 20:00.
- 5.10 In respect of car parking it is understood that the parking requirements for education and employment uses are the same. In any event it is not anticipated that the proposal will generate any requirement for greater parking demand than the existing use with a manager and three staff together with trades people. Students attending would either be dropped off or arrive via public transport and this would be very different to customers arriving and leaving the previous use of the premises.
- 5.11 The application proposal is on behalf of a well-established provider in Blackpool and will provide vocational and education and training in a location which is suitable for such a use. The loss of a relatively small amount of commercial space is significantly outweighed by the learning and training opportunities the application proposal will provide and this is supported by NPPF which places significant weight on education and the delivery of facilities.



Chapter 6

Conclusion

- 6.1 The application proposal seeks the change of use from a former painting and decorating trade counter use to an education and training centre.
- 6.2 The proposal represents the expansion of facilities at an existing school providing opportunities for existing students at the school to engage in an increased range of learning opportunities.
- 6.3 The proposal will result in the loss of a small commercial premises. However, this is significantly outweighed by the benefits of enhanced educational facilities and the wider skills which will be taught to students. The proposal is supported specifically by the NPPF and the Core Strategy which promotes increasing the skills of residents and expanding their opportunities.
- 6.4 The application proposal accords with the development plan and should be approved without delay in accordance with the NPPF.