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Planning Support Statement on behalf of the Blackpool Pier Company for the retention of an outdoor bar and associated seating area, land adjacent to Central Pier, Blackpool

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and associated documents which form the application submission.

2.0 Background to the Application

August 2017- a portable bar set up was erected to support a Classic Car Show event, this consisted of portable bars and Gazebos.

February 2018- Building on the success of this pop-up bar the Company purchased some containers which were fitted out with a bar installation and the Company complimented the area with some seating that was placed on decking.

May 2019- A canopy was installed over the bar area along with a large extension to the deck area providing more seating.

July 2019- The Local Authority Health and Safety Department raised concerns regarding the suitability of the structure in particular wanting to know whether it had been influenced by any design produced by a competent person.

August 2019- The company was issued with an improvement notice requiring the company to show certification and design specifications were fit for purpose.

August 2019- Shephard Gilmore Structural Engineers based in Leeds were commissioned to undertake a survey and produce a report, they did so, and improvements were recommended to support the canopy and improve the support on the larger decked area.

July 2020- Works were completed in line with the structural advice and the Company submitted a Regulation Certificate Application and paid the fee on the 1st July 2020, despite chasing this application on the 15th and 29th July 2020 we have still had no response.

January 2021- Contact made with Local Authority to get the ball rolling with a Planning Application for South Pier to discover no Planning permission in place for Central Pier. No letters or calls have been received by the Local Authority in relation to this, as such it is merely verbal notification at this stage.

3.0 Application Site and Surrounding Area.

3.1 The application site is land immediately adjacent to the north side of Central Pier on the promenade. The site is part of the wider promenade area which stretches along the sea front at Blackpool, and which has been much improved in recent years. The site is one of those 'dead' areas immediately adjacent the larger attraction which is the beginning of the Pier. The land slopes gently from the highway down towards the sea front.



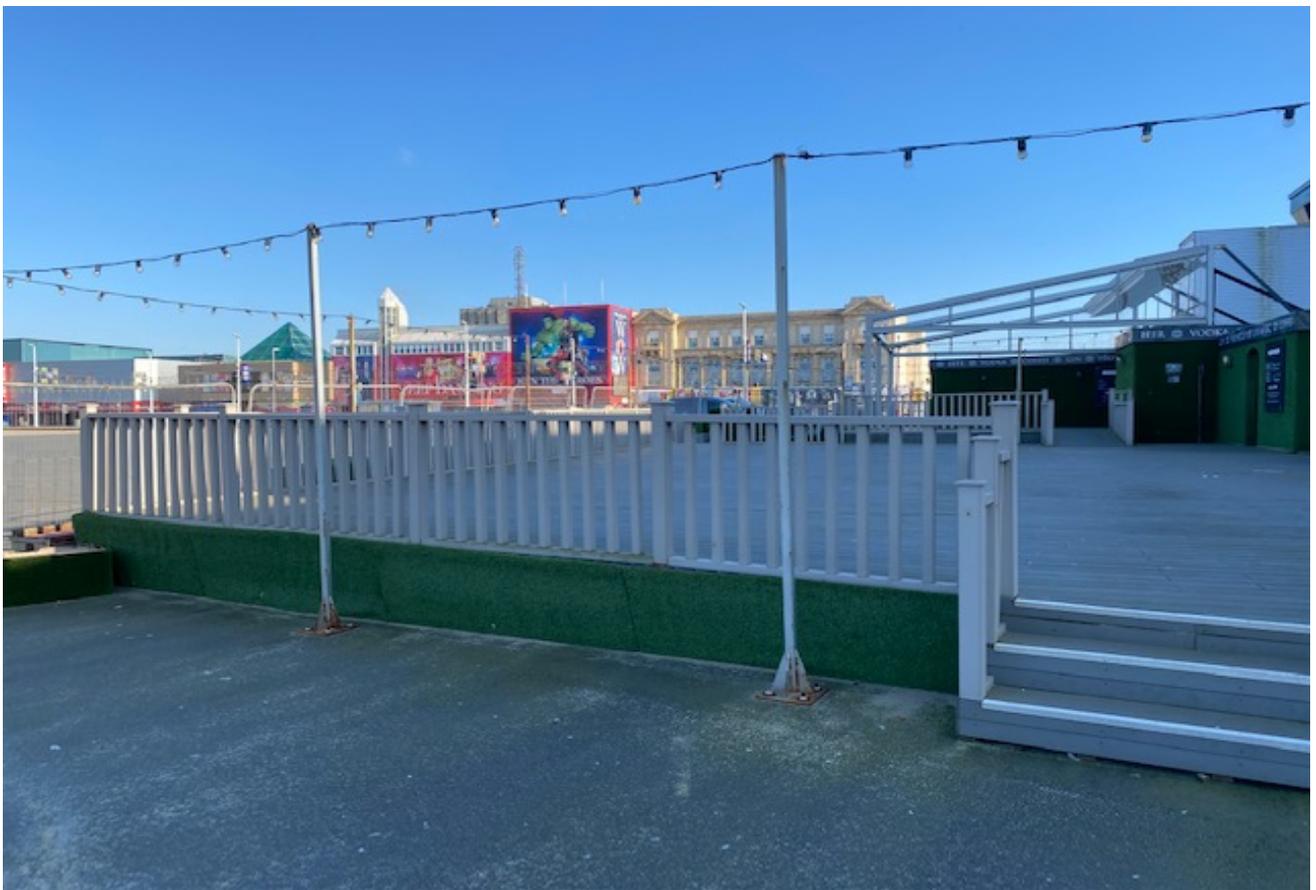


4.0 Application Proposal

4.1 The planning application seeks the retention and slight upgrade of the 'Terrace Bar'. The development consists of a bar, and surrounding decking area which serves as both a seating area and an outside live music venue. The 'bar' consists of a series of interlocked timber decking, with raised seats and surrounded by low level timber fencing. It is set at two levels with the live music area set on the side nearest to the sea front.

4.2 Around the bar is the frame for a canopy and to the side of the bar are a series of hidden 'portaloo' toilets.

The bar measures some 344 sq metres in floor are, some 26m in length on two levels and some 18m metres wide at its widest.



5.0 Planning Policies

Policy CS4 of the Blackpool Core Strategy states as follows: “5. Core Policies

Retail and Other Town Centre Uses

5.50 Blackpool Town Centre is the sub-regional centre for the Fylde Coast and plays a pivotal role in driving the local economy and providing Fylde Coast residents and visitors with shopping facilities to meet a wide range of needs.

5.51 To protect the vitality and viability of the town centre and to successfully position it as the first-choice shopping destination for Fylde Coast residents and an attractive place to visit to do business, Policy CS4 identifies Blackpool Town Centre as the focus for major new retail development and other town centre uses, whilst also recognising the supporting role that District and Local Centres have in meeting the needs of local communities. Further measures to achieve a thriving town centre are dealt with in Policy CS17: Blackpool Town Centre.

Policy CS4: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses

1. In order to strengthen Blackpool Town Centre’s role as the sub-regional centre for retail on the Fylde Coast, its vitality and viability will be safeguarded and improved by:

a. Focusing new major retail development in the town centre to strengthen the offer and improve the quality of the shopping experience

b. The preparation and implementation of a Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan, working with stakeholders to arrest decline and restore confidence in the town centre

2. For Town, District and Local Centres within the Borough, retail and other town centre uses will be supported where they are appropriate to the scale, role and function of the centre.

3. In edge of centre and out of centre locations, proposals for new retail development and other town centre uses will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

Section 7 of the Core Strategy is relevant to the piers: “Regenerating Blackpool Town Centre and Resort Core Leisure and Business Tourism

7.27 If Blackpool is to build on its status as Britain’s favourite seaside resort it needs to provide new high-quality attractions and accommodation, which will help to broaden the resort’s appeal alongside investment in key existing leisure and entertainment landmarks. These together will create more repeat visits and encourage new visitors to the resort year-round, revitalising the visitor economy and positioning Blackpool at the forefront of the tourism market.

a. It is a tourism attraction located in the Resort Core in accordance with policy CS21.

or

b. There are no more centrally located/ sequentially preferable, appropriate sites available for the development; and

- c. The proposal would not cause significant adverse impact on existing centres; and
- d. The proposal would not undermine the Council’s strategies and proposals for regenerating its centres; and
- e. The proposal will be readily accessible by public transport and other sustainable transport modes.”

Policy CS21: Leisure and Business Tourism

1. In order to physically and economically regenerate Blackpool’s resort core and town centre, the focus will be on strengthening the resort’s appeal to attract new audiences year-round. This will be achieved by supporting:

a. Proposals for new high quality tourism attractions focused on the town centre and resort core, including major development opportunities which have the potential to become wider catalysts for regeneration to improve the visitor experience

b. Proposals for new visitor accommodation focused on the town centre, resort core and defined holiday accommodation areas, unless exceptional circumstances justify a peripheral location outside these areas

c. The improvement and enhancement of important existing tourist attractions d. The improvement of existing holiday accommodation and giving marginal,

lower quality guesthouses the opportunity to convert to high quality residential accommodation outside the defined holiday accommodation areas.

e. New development along the promenade’s-built frontage which complements the high-quality public realm investment along the promenade to enhance the appearance of Blackpool’s seafront

f. The enhancement of existing and promotion of new venues and events spaces which can accommodate a year-round programme of events, festivals and conferences.

2. Elsewhere, outside the resort core and town centre, the Council will support new tourism investment that is predominantly focused on existing outdoor leisure and recreation facilities which strengthens the wider resort offer and does not undermine resort regeneration.

NPPF

85. Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:

a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters.

b) define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre.

c) retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones.

d) allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary.

e) where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and

f) recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

86. Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.

87. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.

88. This sequential approach should not be applied to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development.

89. When assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500m² of gross floorspace). This should include assessment of:

a) the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and

b) the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).

90. Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the considerations in paragraph 89, it should be refused.

6.0 Assessment

6.1 This application like all other applications should be considered against all the policies in the Development Plan and all other material planning considerations.

6.2 It is acknowledged that the proposal in its broadest sense is defined in the NPPF as a 'town centre' use. By 'its broadest sense', it is meant that a bar is defined as a town centre use, however, types of bars in

terms of their layout differ depending on which market they are seeking to attract. Some bars are also speciality or niche bars, and the proposal that is the subject of this application seeks to attract people in connection with the wider leisure use associated with Blackpool and its piers, rather than people who want to be in a town centre with multiple alternative outlets to move between.

6.3 Whilst the application site does sit outside the 'town centre' as identified in the Blackpool Core Strategy, it sits immediately adjacent to an area known as "Blackpool Central". Blackpool Central is set to be a 17-acre entertainment complex at a cost of £300 million, and the project will take around nine years to be completed, with work being undertaken in phases.

6.4 Firstly, there is an 'enabling phase' which will involve replacing the existing open air car park with a 1,300-space multi-storey facility.

Phase One will see the main components of the entertainment complex being put into place.

This will include:

The Flying Theatre - the UK's first with wind, fog, vibrations, scents and water-spritz.

Alien Diner - with a rollercoaster service.

Artisan food market

Thrill and gaming zone - with arcade games, laser tag, bumper cars and inflatable attractions.

VR Experience and Adventure Land - piped to be a 'whole body, fully immersive' experience with state-of-the-art visuals and body tracking.

Multimedia Exhibition

Event Square

Phase Two will see the development of residential apartments, further food and drink outlets and a second hotel with 250 bedrooms as well as landscaped public space.

A range of indoor attractions are being built, including the UK's first flying theatre, the world's first multimedia exhibition of its kind and the most advanced virtual reality experience on an epic scale.

As the image below shows this is immediately adjacent to the application site, and the bar is actually shown on the image.



6.5 As such, the policy issue with this application comes down to whether the fact that the site is located just outside the town centre but in a prime tourism location offsets the need for a full sequential test and indeed, whether a. sequential test is actually needed having regard to other policies in the Development Plan.

6.6 Firstly Section 7 of the Core Strategy is relevant to the piers: Central Pier and South Beach both fall within the categorisation of “Resort Core” in the Core Strategy; (page 90).

“Regenerating Blackpool Town Centre and Resort Core Leisure and Business Tourism

“7.27 If Blackpool is to build on its status as Britain’s favourite seaside resort it needs to provide new high-quality attractions and accommodation, which will help to broaden the resort’s appeal alongside investment in key existing leisure and entertainment landmarks. These together will create more repeat visits and encourage new visitors to the resort year-round, revitalising the visitor economy and positioning Blackpool at the forefront of the tourism market.

a. It is a tourism attraction located in the Resort Core in accordance with policy CS21.

or

b. There are no more centrally located/ sequentially preferable, appropriate sites available for the development; and

c. The proposal would not cause significant adverse impact on existing centres; and

- d. The proposal would not undermine the Council's strategies and proposals for regenerating its centres; and*
- e. The proposal will be readily accessible by public transport and other sustainable transport modes."*

Firstly with respect to (a) it is a tourism attraction located in the Resort Core

With respect of requirements (b) – (e) it is considered to accord as well, as follows:

6.7 In respect of b, there are no available open air/ground sites in the town centre. There may well be empty buildings in the town centre, but they provide for an inside bar/dance area, not an open air on the promenade front bar/dance area. As such there would appear to be no available open space capable of accommodating a 400m + area of open bar within the town centre and as such there are no better town centre locations.

6.8 In respect of c, this tourism offer of a bar next to the pier on the sea front can only be provided on the sea front, next to one of the three piers, and as such does not compete with the more traditional 'inside town centre bars.

6.9 In respect of d, the bar fits well with the Pier Leisure offer and alongside the Blackpool central leisure offer, and finally with regard to the site is in a very accessible location by all transport modes

6.10 Therefore, it is considered that the proposal accords with an up-to-date development plan and it also accords with the NPPF, paragraph 86.

Policy CS21: Leisure and Business Tourism

1. In order to physically and economically regenerate Blackpool's resort core and town centre, the focus will be on strengthening the resort's appeal to attract new audiences year-round. This will be achieved by supporting:

- a. Proposals for new high quality tourism attractions focused on the town centre and resort core, including major development opportunities which have the potential to become wider catalysts for regeneration to improve the visitor experience
- b. Proposals for new visitor accommodation focused on the town centre, resort core and defined holiday accommodation areas, unless exceptional circumstances justify a peripheral location outside these areas
- c. The improvement and enhancement of important existing tourist attractions
- d. The improvement of existing holiday accommodation and giving marginal, lower quality guesthouses the opportunity to convert to high quality residential accommodation outside the defined holiday accommodation areas.
- e. New development along the promenade's built frontage which complements the high-quality public realm investment along the promenade to enhance the appearance of Blackpool's seafront
- f. The enhancement of existing and promotion of new venues and events spaces which can accommodate a year-round programme of events, festivals and conferences.

In addition to the issues of supporting and developing the 'resort core', outside the resort core and town centre, the Council will also support new tourism investment that is predominantly focused on existing

outdoor leisure and recreation facilities which strengthens the wider resort offer and does not undermine resort regeneration.

6.11 There is an undoubted overriding need to raise quality in all aspects of the visitor experience in Blackpool, focusing investment and development within the established resort core and town centre, where regeneration and positive change is most needed.

6.12 Opportunities for major new high quality leisure development drawing large numbers of visitors and making a strong contribution to resort regeneration are key to developing an exciting and unique year-round resort destination and supporting a sustainable economy.

6.13 This policy, CS 21, seeks to target leisure tourism investment and development in the resort core and town centre. Proposals for resort attractions elsewhere will generally not be permitted. To quote the Council's own aims and drivers for development:

"Regenerating Blackpool Town Centre and Resort Core

Blackpool has a number of well-known visitor attractions which make an important contribution to the overall resort offer. Proposals for high quality tourism related development including ancillary retail and food and beverage uses (A3 and A5) specifically related to marketing the existing tourism offer will be supported which complements and reinforces the role of these existing important attractions, securing their long-term future.

The promenade is one of Blackpool's key visitor assets and is considered to be the 'shop window' of the resort. Recent multi-million-pound investment has transformed the promenade seafront, including a new seawall, new headlands, enhanced public realm, improved access onto the beach and a new tramway. It now provides many outdoor leisure and recreation opportunities including walking and cycling.

To complement this recent investment, the Council will support new high-quality development that builds upon the success of the seafront.

Conferences, events and festivals are vital to Blackpool's visitor economy and year-round appeal. Recent improvements to the promenade, including the new Tower Festival Headland, provide a new opportunity to host outdoor events and festivals. The Winter Gardens will play an important role in hosting conferences, events and festivals (Policy CS18) and larger hotels in the resort will continue to provide supporting conference and exhibition facilities. The Core Strategy supports continued investment in these facilities with proposals being supported that re-establish Blackpool's role as a nationally recognised conference venue."

6.14 It is considered that the proposal sits exactly in the area of the Council's aims for change which the above seeks to achieve.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 In conclusion therefore it is not considered that the proposal is contrary to the NPPF or the Development Plan. Instead it is considered that the proposal accords with the Core Strategy and Policy CS21 of the Blackpool Core Strategy



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