



Proposed Hotel

Former Post Office & Sorting Office,
Abingdon & Edward Street, Blackpool

Design & Access Statement

11/06/2021

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The Post Office and Listed Telephone Boxes, Abingdon Street

1.0 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Franklin Ellis Architects on behalf of Ashall Projects in support of a Detailed Planning Application and Listed Building Application for the refurbishment and extension of the Former Post Office on Abingdon Street and associated Sorting Office on Edward Street into a branded hotel in Blackpool City Centre.

This Design and Access Statement covers the key criteria involved in the design process and the design principles on which the scheme is based. The statement looks at the site context, its history, townscape, and relation to local planning policy. It describes the detailed design of the proposal and the impact this will have on the local area.

This statement includes a Heritage Assessment to account for the Listed elements of the proposals and the historic setting of the development, within Section 2.0 of the document.

Application Background

Full planning permission has previously been granted for similar hotel led schemes. The current application has been developed to accommodate changes in the market and current demand. As such the revised proposals incorporate several changes to the previous approvals which are outlined in this document.

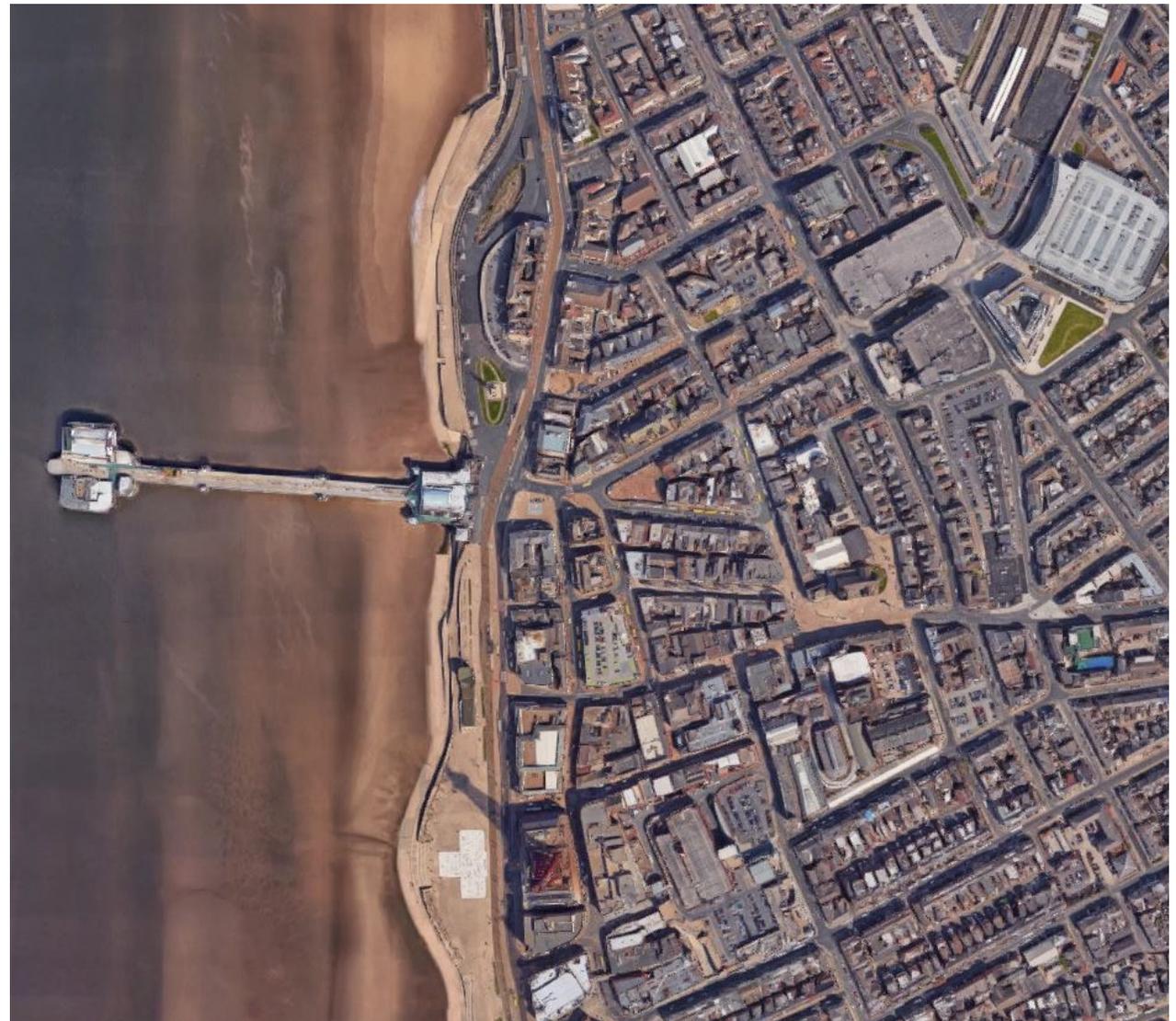


Figure 1.00 Blackpool Town Centre, Aerial View

Executive Summary

Key Scheme Objectives

1.0 To regenerate and reinvigorate a large under-utilised site within a key regeneration zone in Blackpool City Centre.

2.0 To make a positive contribution to local heritage via the renovation of the Listed Former Post Office and associated Sorting Office, bringing two of Blackpool's finest early 20th century buildings back into long term and appropriate use, safeguarding them for the future.

3.0 To provide market demand high quality hotel provision in an ideal location.

4.0 To enhance the activity of the street frontages to Abingdon Street and Edward Street, through the provision of active frontage and amenity.

5.0 To improve the safety, attractiveness, and animation of the adjacent Public Realm.

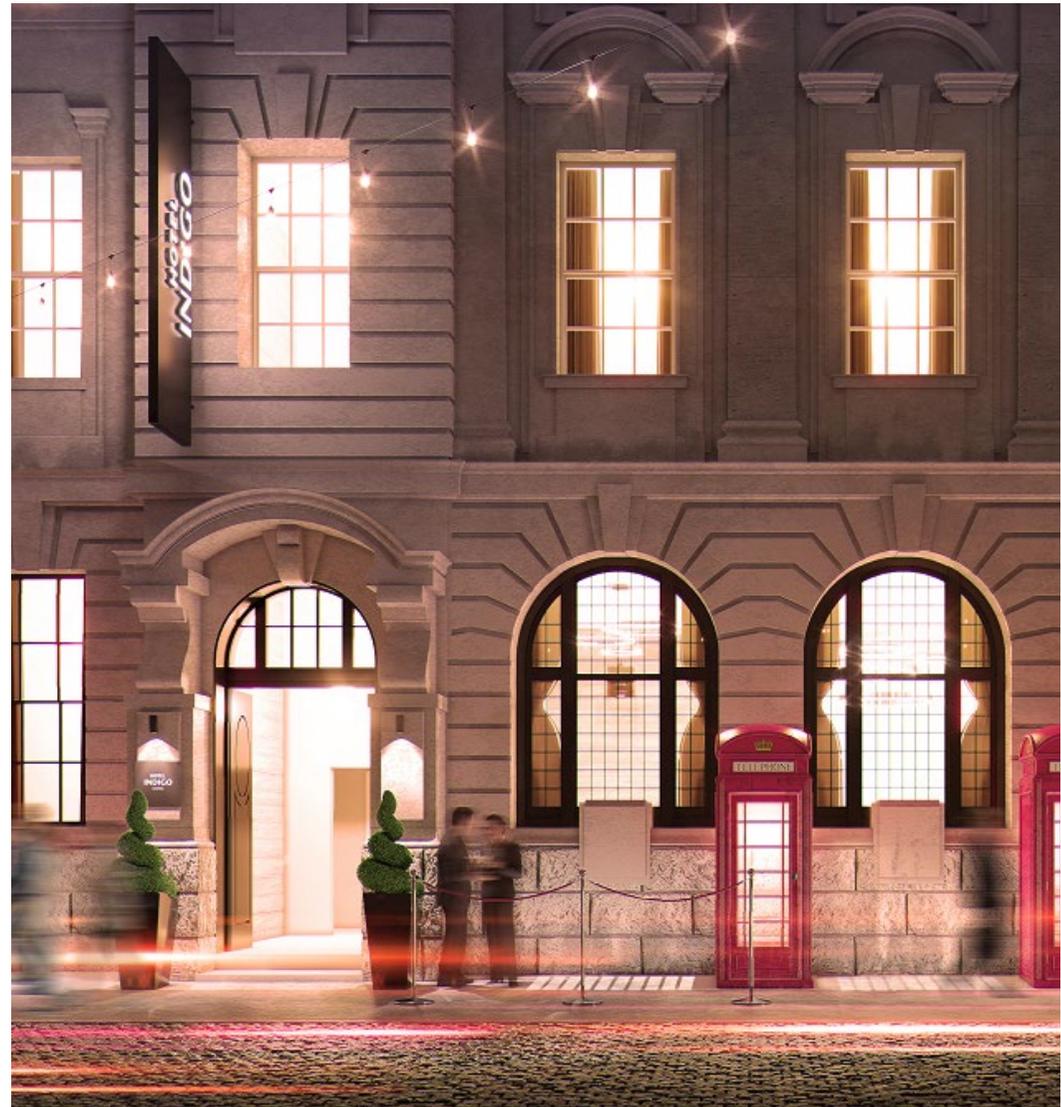


Figure 1.01 Proposed Development when viewed from Abingdon Street

The Proposal

The 3,645sq.m site as defined by the red line is located between Edward Street and Abingdon Street in Blackpool.

The proposed development includes the renewal and redevelopment of the existing Former Post Office Building and associated Sorting Office in Blackpool Town centre into a high-quality hotel, including a mix of around 150 quality rooms that are suitable both for the conference/corporate market and the leisure market.

The development will include an attractive and market appropriate dining option which appeals to both hotel and non-resident guests, situated in a highly appropriate location within the town centre.

The development will seek to provide an 'Oasis in the Centre of Town' feel for visitors and guests, whilst enhancing Blackpool's high end guest room offering alongside the provision of several options for events and meetings to improve the towns corporate and conferencing offering.

The development will provide several unique selling points, including the provision of guest lounges on the top floor of the Sorting Office building, ensuring a one-of-a-kind development in the heart of the town.

The proposals will seek to not only respect the Heritage Assets being redeveloped but also to enhance and safeguard their use, further assisting the wider regeneration of the locality and its place at the heart of Blackpool's Town Centre Conservation Area.



Figure 1.02 – Site Location Plan

The Client

The development is being brought forward by Ashall Property, a private property investment and development company which focuses on creating investment value through property development and asset management. In recent years Ashall have developed projects with an investment value in excess of £500m, comprising over 1 million square feet of office and commercial space.

This has included the development of Cobalt Park, the UK's largest office park, in conjunction with a joint venture partner, and the award-winning refurbishment of the Grade II* listed former Royal Insurance building in Liverpool and its conversion into a 116 room Aloft Hotel.

Ashall's experience with the Aloft Hotel development ideally places it for the successful redevelopment of similarly Grade II listed Post Office. A selection of Ashall's recent developments, including Aloft, can be seen adjacent.



Figure 1.03 – Ashalls, Previous Developments

Figure 1.04 – Ashalls, Previous Developments

The Hotel Brand

The proposed hotel brand is part of the Intercontinental Hotel Group Portfolio.

IHG

IHG Hotels & Resorts is one of the world's leading hotel brand holders, with around 350,000 employees working across more than 100 countries in IHG branded hotels, delivering close to 6,000 hotels with over 880,000 beds.

Their diverse portfolio of differentiated brands is well known and loved by millions of consumers around the world. Of these, the Hotel Indigo brand has been selected as the most appropriate brand for the proposed hotel.

Hotel Indigo

With hotels in culturally diverse locations all over the world, no two Hotel Indigo's are the same. Each hotel draws on the story of its local area to inspire every aspect of the hotel, from intriguing design to distinctive local ingredients in their menus.

The proposed offering at Blackpool will be no different, drawing from the rich history and culture of Blackpool to develop a unique, distinctive and outstanding hotel.

A portion of the rooms will be delivered in a range of suited format providing a range of accommodation types to suite the range of potential guests.



Figure 1.05 Hotel Indigo – Previous Developments

Franklin Ellis Architects

Franklin Ellis Architects, an award-winning Midlands based practice, in operation since 1993, and with extensive experience in the hospitality sector, are leading the Design Team for the proposed development.

Relevant Experience

Franklin Ellis Architects have extensive experience within the hospitality sector and have worked on a range of successful city centre hotel developments, ranging from new build dual brand hotels, such as the recent Moxy / Residents Inn in Slough, and the Holiday Inn / Staybridge Stratford City Hotel at the Olympic Park in London, through to the recent development of a new Hotel Indigo, the brand chosen for implementation at the Post Office, in the heart of Chester City centre's conservation area.

Franklin Ellis' hospitality experience is also reinforced by wide-ranging involvement in the renovation and restoration of heritage assets, including Leicester City Council City Hall and the recent refurbishment of the Exeter House of Fraser, a 1930's art deco building, into another new Hotel Indigo.

Examples of FEA's experience can be seen adjacent.



Figure 1.06 Franklin Ellis – Previous Developments

2.0 Site Context & Analysis

In this section we have looked at the site context in terms of the city centre, townscape, heritage, and local planning policy. As a conclusion we have identified the key development constraints and opportunities presented by the site.

Wider Context

The site is located within Blackpool Town Centre and as such is easily accessible to the wide range of retail, leisure, and transport facilities.



Figure 2.01 – Site in Wider Context

City Context

The site is located in the town centre boundary, as defined in the Blackpool Core Strategy. The development site is within a short walk to several of Blackpool's key cultural and historic assets, including St Johns Church and Square, and the Winter Gardens to the immediate south, and the Town Hall and Metropole Hotel to the west.

It is within easy walking distance of both the North Pier and Blackpool Tower, which are primary tourist attractions and key landmarks within the town centre.

The sites' location, within the heart of the town, is also ideally situated within a short walk from Blackpool Railway Station, and Talbot Road, which is a key arterial vehicular route into Blackpool from the North.



Figure 2.02 – Blackpool Tower



Figure 2.03 – The Winter Gardens



Figure 2.04– The Metropole



Figure 2.05 – Blackpool Town Hall



Figure 2.06 – St Johns Church and Square



Figure 2.07 – Site in Wider Context with Distances



Figure 2.08 – Blackpool from Above



Figure 2.09– Site Aerial View

Immediate Site Context

The site is currently occupied by the Former Post Office building, fronting Abingdon Street, and its associated Sorting Office, fronting Edward Street, with a large interior courtyard separating the two buildings. The site is in the historic city centre and sits within a wider urban block, which lies adjacent to St Johns Square to the south and Deansgate to the North. Abingdon Street, adjacent the Post Office frontage, is a semi – pedestrianised road which leads towards Church Street and the Winter Gardens, acting as a primary city centre pedestrian corridor. Edward Street to the east, adjacent the Sorting Office, is a secondary road characterised by low rise Victorian housing and the sorting office itself, previously acting as servicing access for the post office. The surrounding area is the heavily built up and has also been the focus of recent public realm improvements,

The primary street facing frontages to the existing buildings are in good condition and are of high architectural value, both in heritage terms and within the setting of their respective streetscapes. Fronting the Post Office on Abingdon Street a row of eleven listed telephone kiosks, further enhancing the heritage setting. The interior courtyard includes sections of elevation which are in a poor state of repair and these will be carefully renewed as part of the development.

Whilst the surrounding urban fabric retains much of its historic character and street patterns, it is interceded by several post war buildings of poorer architectural quality which detract from the local character. However, the redevelopment of the Post Office and Sorting Office will generally uplift the immediate context and result in an improved setting, enhanced street scenes and a strengthened historic character.

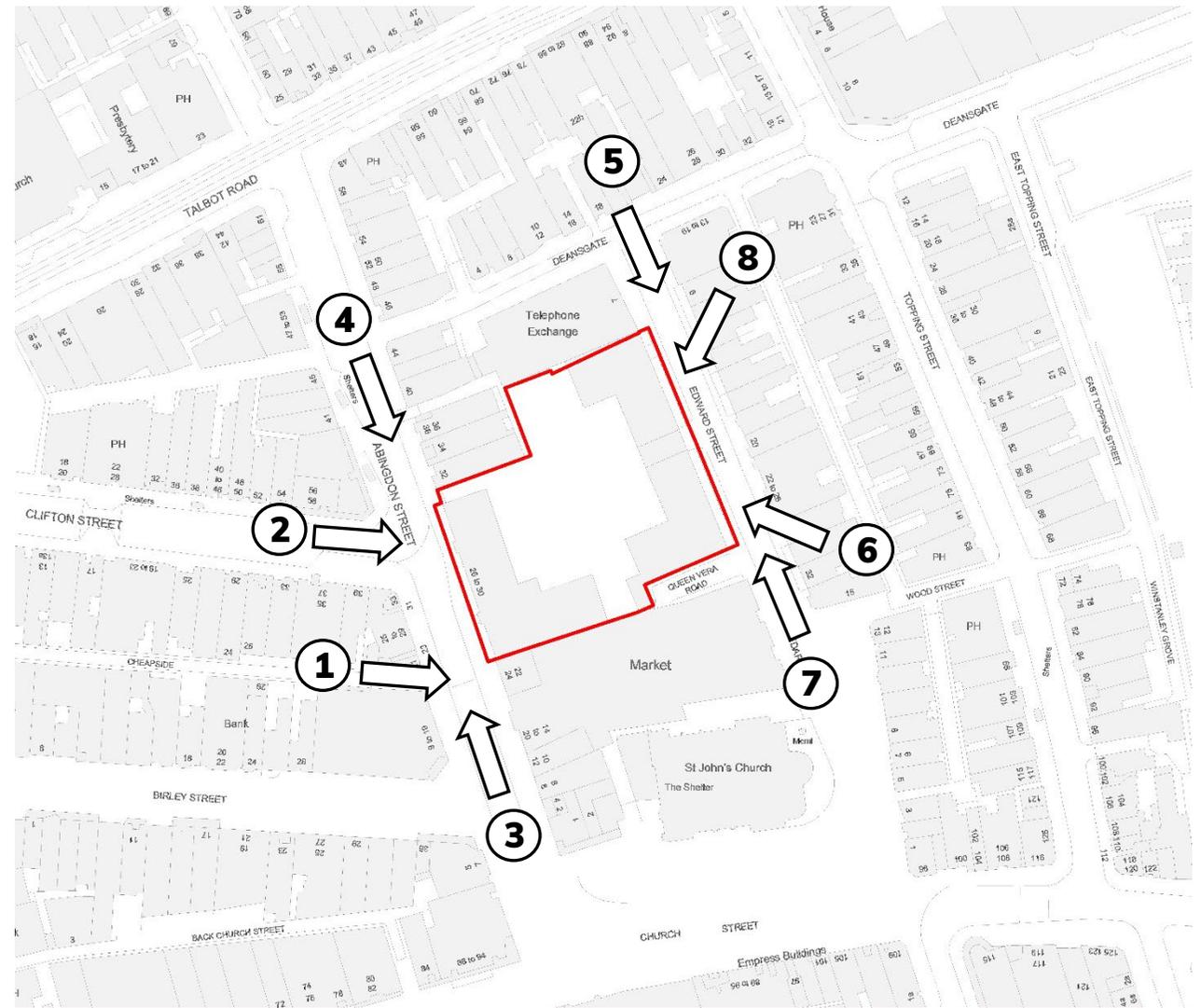


Figure 2.10 – View Key Plan



Figure 2.11 – Site viewed from Cheapside



Figure 2.12 – Site Viewed Clifton Street



Figure 2.13 – Site viewed from Abingdon Street



Figure 2.14 – Site viewed from Abingdon Street



Figure 2.15 – Site viewed from Howard Street



Figure 2.16 - Site viewed from Howard Street



Figure 2.17 – Site viewed from Howard Street

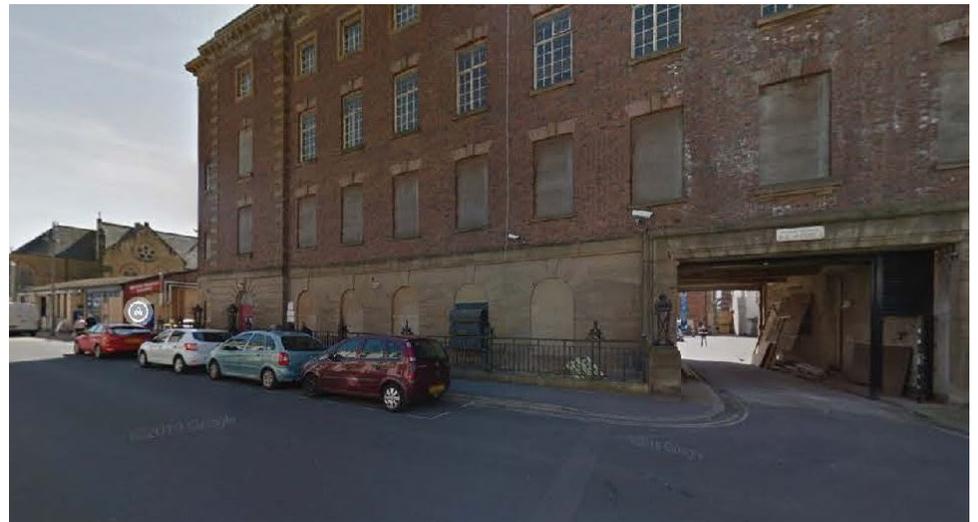


Figure 2.18 – Site viewed from Howard Street

Former Post Office, Abingdon Street

The Former General Post Office Building, located on Abingdon Street, is a Grade II listed neo renaissance building and is a key building in defining Blackpool's civic character.

The building, set across 3 storeys above a basement level, helps define the status of Abingdon Street as a primary town centre corridor, and is one of several historically important buildings in the vicinity.

The façade of the Post Office is a key heritage asset to the street and the proposals will include no alterations to the general fabric façade. The proposals will however seek to repair and restore elements of the existing façade, including the windows, where appropriate.



Figure 2.19 – Listed Telephone Kiosks



Figure 2.20 – General Post Office Facade



Figure 2.22– Post Office Aerial View



Figure 2.22 – Entrance Door



Figure 2.23 – Stone Detail

Sorting Office, Edward Street

The Edward Street Sorting Office is a later addition to the Post Office complex. The Sorting Office is a locally listed structure in the neo renaissance style and along with the earlier Post Office is a key building in defining Blackpool's civic character.

The building, set across 4 storeys above a basement level, is the most prominent structure along Edward Street. Although being the service face of the Post Office complex, the retention of wrought-iron railings and lamps to the back of the footway strengthen the buildings and streets overall civic character. Due to its prominence and scale as an historical asset, proposals will seek to maintain the existing façade and to restore features where they have been damaged or fallen into disrepair.



Figure 2.24 – Sorting Office Façade



Figure 2.25 – Sorting Office Façade



Figure 2.26 – Sorting Office Aerial View



Figure 2.27 – Entrance Door



Figure 2.28 – Façade Detail

The Courtyard, Edward Street

The Courtyard which links the Post Office and Sorting Office is partially cleared of more recent development and remains in a largely derelict state.

Historic mapping indicates that major changes to the rear of the property, within the existing courtyard, occurred between 1956 and 1963. This suggests that these alterations are of that era and therefore of lesser heritage significance.

In enhancing the character and presence of the Post Office and Sorting Office the repair and alteration of the inner facades to the courtyard will be necessary.



Figure 2.29 – Courtyard View



Figure 2.30 – Courtyard View



Figure 2.31 – Courtyard Aerial View



Figure 2.32 – Courtyard View



Figure 2.33 – Courtyard View

Policy Context

The Blackpool Core Strategy identifies the site as within the town centre boundary, characterizing the town centre as the focus for major new development in the Borough, and contains a number of planning policies supporting town centre development.

The site is also defined with Blackpool's Town Centre Strategy as being within Zone F, the Mixed Use Zone, with the Post Office identified as a key building.

The Town Centre Strategy identifies an over-supply of older hotels and guest houses, which are prevalent on the edge of the town centre, with the majority offering budget accommodation. It highlights that there are a limited number of hotels within the defined town centre boundary.

The proposals will assist in meeting the objectives of the Town Centre Strategy, specifically:

Objective 2: Strengthen the town centre as a vibrant leisure, entertainment, cultural and business tourism destination for residents and visitors,

The proposals will assist in developing an enhanced conference and business tourism offer as part of what will be a high quality hotel offer,

and Objective 5: Improve the quality of buildings, streets and spaces and their maintenance and management.

The proposals will Improve the quality of buildings, streets and spaces and their maintenance and management.

The proposals will deliver a high quality development on a key vacant sites e.g. Post Office building

The proposals include the refurbishment of key buildings complementing public realm investment.



Figure 2.34 – Blackpool Town Centre Strategy Zones