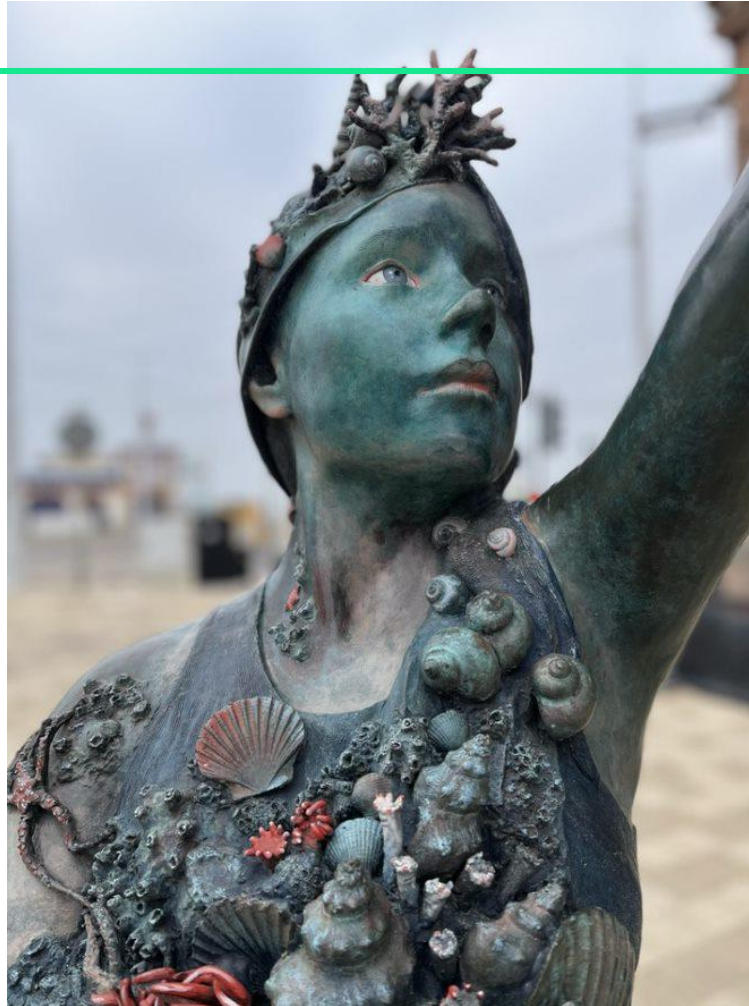


Blackpool Town Centre Strategy & Action Plan

Blackpool Council



Agenda



1. Scope & approach
2. Discovery summary
3. Town centre framework
4. Key themes & recommendations
5. Next Steps

CBRE

BlackpoolCouncil

Introduction

- Refresh of the previous Town Centre Strategy, created in March 2013, to align with changes in town centre and local government strategy, policy and best practice.
- CBRE appointed through tender process in November 2021, with work beginning in December 2021.
- The new Strategy looks to address activity for the next 15 years, with a 5-year Action Plan that is renewed annually.
- Engagement with town centre stakeholders began in January 2022, and continued until March 2022 in line with the Welcome Back Fund.

Project scope

The new Town Centre Strategy & Action Plan has been developed in line with the substantial levels of guidance developed in the last two/three years to support the revitalisation of the high street, as well as taking into account best practice seen elsewhere such as:

Build Back Better



Revitalising Town Centres



Blackpool Local Plan



High Streets Task Force



The Town Centre Strategy & Action Plan looks to build on many of the areas covered in the existing Strategy, and introduce new areas including:

Vision and objectives



Literature review, data review & policy context



Governance review



Engagement



Sector analysis



COVID impact and recovery



Priorities for intervention



Recommendations



Action plan

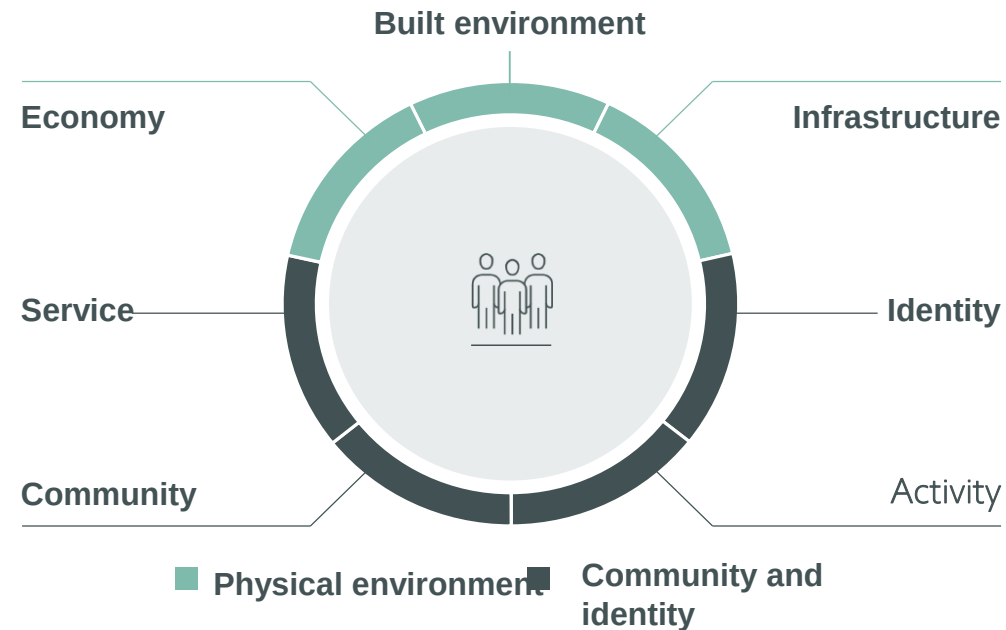


APPROACH

A strategic approach to place

CBRE's approach to placemaking comprises of two core elements (as shown on the diagram on the right), which is split across the Physical Environment and Community & Identity. We consider the physical and non-physical elements of a place, of which the key ingredients shown here come together to create a destination.

Source: CBRE research



20%

The speed of lettings and sales could be increased by up to 20% through place design.

Source: Places Matter Capitalisation Report

20%

Place design can add up to 20% in rental and capital value for commercial property.

Source: Places Matter Capitalisation Report

12.5%

The workplace environment can improve productivity and performance by as much as 12.5% or reduce it by as much as 17%.

Source: Genster, The US Workplace Survey

85%

Of businesses surveyed said the quality of streetscape affected perceptions of occupiers and employees.

Source: NRDC Report 2013

Summary

A quick summary from the wider national reports, reports specific to Blackpool and from existing audience research.



1.

The town centre is still relevant

2021 footfall and dwell, along with survey feedback, shows that the town centre is still used by its community.



2.

Perception of the town centre is a challenge

Blackpool is plagued by a negative narrative, perpetuated by residents feeling that their needs are second to tourists.



3.

The immediate audience is economically challenged

The town centre's immediate locality is deprived. In order to be sustainable, the town centre must continue to pull from within wider Fylde Coast area.



4.

The shift in consumer retail habits is prevalent

The pandemic has caused seismic shift in how we use physical retail. Blackpool's retail footprint will need to adapt to secure a vibrant town centre.



5.

There is an exciting opportunity

All of this presents exciting opportunity to drive meaningful change in Blackpool Town Centre.

BENCHMARKING

We looked at similar towns and coastal locations, including Scarborough, Eastbourne and Preston to see where Blackpool could take learnings and apply these within the Town Centre Strategy.

Themes



1. Heritage

Places are often known, remembered and enjoyed as a result of rich heritage. From listed and landmark buildings to popular attractions and heritage trails, they all make a resort – supporting the local economy and attracting mass tourism.



2. Environment

Pleasant public realm, vegetation and open space provide a welcome environment for town centre users. Open spaces provide a place to dwell, connect and breathe whilst considered public realm with added greenery make users feel safe and welcome on their town centre streets.



3. Connection

Considering key spinal corridors from seafront to town centre that are attractive and inviting will entice people to explore the offer of the town centre. Clear wayfinding at key decision points will facilitate movement around the area. Traffic connections through the town need to be considered.



4. Reasons to visit

A broad offer of high street and independent vendors, teamed with activating empty units and open space with a programme of events, pop up activations and entertainment, will bring vibrancy and a lease of life to the town centre. The constantly refreshed offer will continue to give residents a reason to visit.



5. Culture

When culture is integrated into an area, it will add another level of vibrancy to the mix. A wide cultural offer will continually change, giving a reason for people to visit to see what is new. It can also put forward a new perspective and help to shift perception if used in the story of a town.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We held engagement sessions with many town centre stakeholders representing local businesses and community groups. Held as either 1:1 conversations or workshops with groups, we asked stakeholders to consider the success and challenges for the town centre, and how they envisage Blackpool in the future.

Themes



1. Progressive

Acknowledgement of the successful change that has taken place or in progress. Public investment is driving private investment and the town centre is changing for the better. An evolved strategy needs to build on this, acknowledging the changing world and environment town centres now face.



2. Unique

Blackpool conjures up fond memories and holds a special place for many. Rich in history, it aims to protect its heritage whilst looking forward. An opportunity exists to differentiate Blackpool from the crowd by emphasising and building on its cultural and entertainment offer, highlighting a sense of fun.



3. Footprint

Town centres and their uses are changing and there was a feeling the current town centre is too large (especially retail) and its footprint needs to change (or shrink) with better zoning, more public space and different uses e.g. residential.



4. Connectivity

A feeling that the town centre can feel cut off from itself to being choked by the road network. Once within the town, wayfinding is poor and areas can feel unconnected and pedestrian flows unclear. There is a need to connect the day and night time economies and consideration for digital connectivity.



5. Green shoots

While positive change is happening and investment is apparent, there is a lack of vegetation and natural spaces in the centre. Consideration needs to be given to creating 'lungs' for the town centre to breathe and the wellbeing of its users, together with consideration for the climate change agenda.



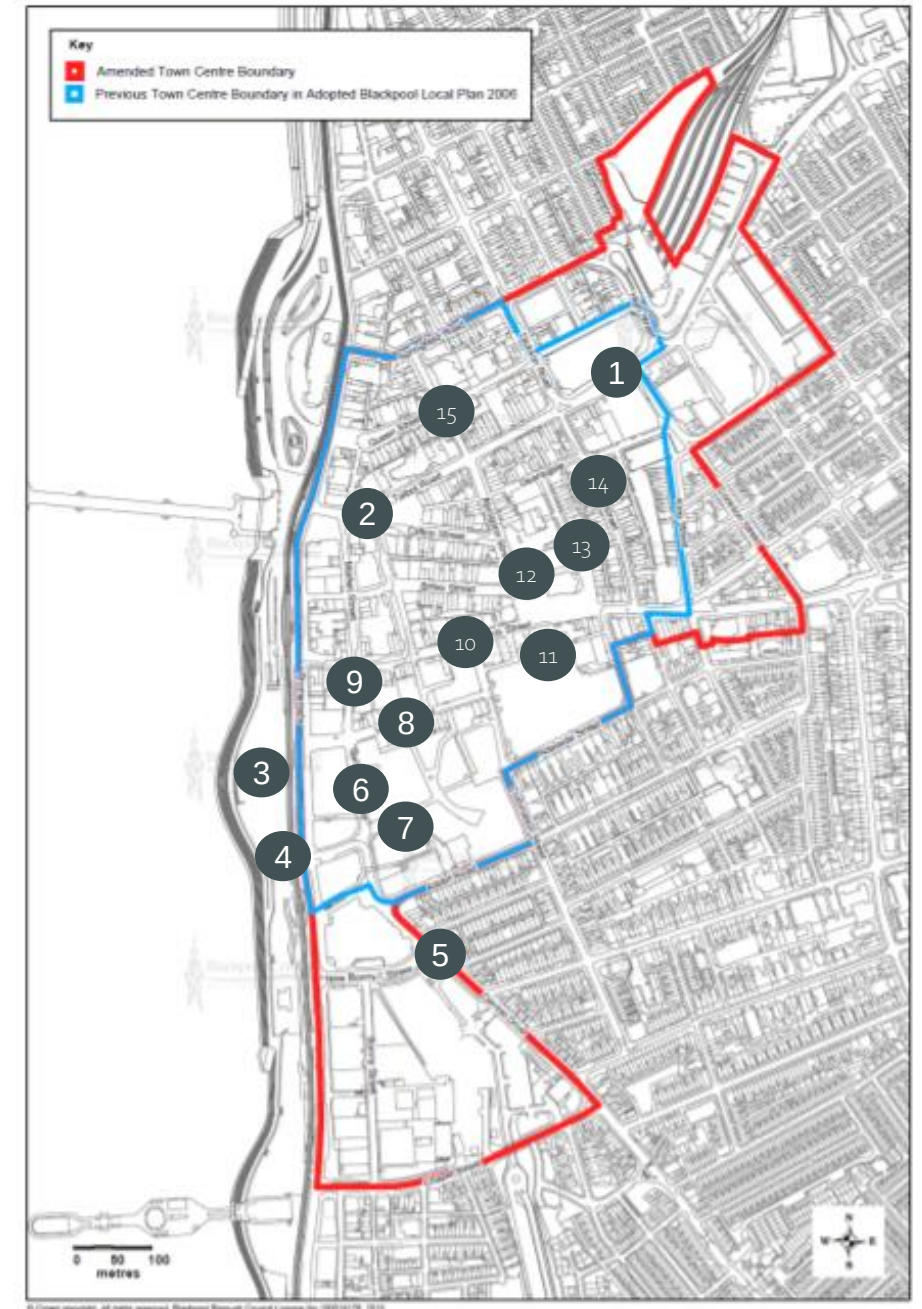
6. Community

The town centre serves a wide audience with differing needs which can be a challenge. Good governance, communication and community engagement can ensure objectives and needs are met and the power of collaboration is harnessed for the better.

Town centre audit

Blackpool Town Centre

No	Location
1	Talbot Gateway
2	Talbot Road / North Pier
3	Promenade / Blackpool Tower
4	Promenade – links to Houndshell
5	Blackpool Central
6	Bank Hey Street (part 1)
7	Houndshell (inc approach)
8	Victoria Street
9	Bank Hey Street (part 2)
10	Church Street / Corporation Street / Birley Street
11	St John's Square
12	Abingdon Street and Market
13	Edward Street
14	Topping Street
15	Queen Street



Observations

- Some good areas of public realm improvements laying foundations for wider town development.
- Street furniture is haphazard, tired and dilapidated. This presents an opportunity to refresh and add town centre identity.
- Wayfinding is in place but needs more presence to draw the eye.
- Opportunity to improve key gateways to the town centre to entice visitors from the promenade and forthcoming Blackpool Central.
- Extension of the illuminations to 'illuminate' the town centre could be brought to life through floor lighting, wayfinding and street furniture to create an identity for Blackpool Town Centre.



STRATEGIC PLACE AUDIT

We conducted a detailed place audit through the town centre from the promenade covering all key streets including Talbot Road, Central Drive, Bank Hey Street, St John's Square and Edward Street to name a few.

Themes



1. Connectivity

Footfall from the seafront to the town centre has been consistently identified as an issue. Key connecting corridors from the seafront and through the town, along with clear identifiable wayfinding will entice footfall into and around the town centre.



2. Heritage

Blackpool has key iconic heritage assets with the Tower, the piers and The Winter Gardens along with smaller but equally as important assets such as The Grundy Art Gallery, The Grand Theatre and all the art deco building structures in the town centre. These can be used to build an identity for the town.



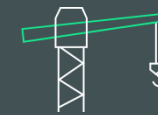
3. Environment

Some public realm improvements have already taken place giving solid foundation for wider roll out and consideration should be given to de-cluttering street furniture, adding greenery and making way for open space.



4. Sustainability

There is an oversupply of retail infrastructure for today's footprint and usage will need to be reviewed. Along with this, the growing emphasis on climate change and how this affects a town centre should be given attention and continuing to improve accessibility by public transport and reducing reliance on cars.



5. Foundations

Blackpool is by no-means starting from scratch. A heavy programme of investment is already visibly underway and there are pockets of improvements throughout the town centre. This momentum provides a solid foundation for the forthcoming strategy to evolve and build upon.

STRATEGIC PLACE AUDIT



1.

Corridor(s) from Promenade to town centre (*Adelaide St. West / Victoria St. and Church St..*)



5.

Church Street / Winter Gardens interface



2.

Bank Hey Street and approach to Houndshell



6.

St John's Square and Abingdon Street Market.



3.

Blackpool Central to Tower / Houndshell



7.

Birley Street / Church Street



4.

Bank Hey Street- from rear of Tower to Church Street



8.

Queen Street / The Grundy Art Gallery

AUDIENCE TYPES AND INSIGHTS

Using mosaic profiling we looked at the dominant audience profiles in both the immediate locality of Blackpool and across the wider Fylde Coast.



1. Deprivation

Audiences in the less affluent mosaic profiles live in the immediate vicinity of the town centre.

The town centre needs to be accessible by foot, provide affordable entertainment and an economy convenience offer so as not to alienate this user while trying to attract a more affluent customer.



4. Appeal

The town centre needs to broaden its offer to continue to appeal to these user groups. And invite lapsed users back in. Quality public realm, greenery, wider variety of F&B and open space to further enhance the town centre offer and heighten its appeal. Abingdon St Market and the Houndshell leisure offer will give reasons for visitors to return and explore the town.



2. Affluence

Some of the wealthiest mosaic groups are over represented in the wider Fylde Coast area, meaning that there is potential to attract these audiences back to Blackpool Town Centre.



5. Variety

A constantly evolving offer in the town centre will give local residents a reason to return. This could be new exhibitions at The Grundy, a programme of town centre events, seasonal shows at The Grand and The Winter Gardens. Constantly promoting the variety of offer in the town – to residents- will begin to foster repeat visitation and will start to drive changes in perception.



3. Infrastructure

The town centre has some solid infrastructure that will appeal to all of these audiences including good public transport and parking as well as libraries, art galleries and theatres.



Summary

Story



1. RELEVANCE

Blackpool Town Centre still has a place for its community. This is demonstrated by the high footfall, dwell and ongoing investment programme. The strategy needs to knit together the hard infrastructure with the "heart and lungs", community element of the town.



4. HERITAGE & CULTURE

The iconic heritage assets of Blackpool, its strong cultural offer and history in the performing arts, present an opportunity to develop a clear identity and levy the USPs of the town to both residents and

27.2
million

Footfall in 2021 (VEPI reports)



5. RESIDENTS

Tourism is a key element to the success of Blackpool Town Centre. However, the perception is that 'everything is geared towards tourists'. There is no clear channel of communication to residents and there is a perception mismatch in how they view their town.



2. ENVIRONMENT

Quality public realm with green space have been heavily referenced in both a people perspective – community connectivity, wellness and a feeling of civic pride and from a climate perspective - ensuring that the town centre is looked after for the visitor of tomorrow.



3. CONNECTION

There is a mismatch of use between the promenade and the town centre. Pulling footfall into the town from the promenade and then again through key areas of the town to strengthen town centre success.



6. GOVERNANCE

There are two strong themes. The need to track progress of the town centre strategy and the need for a platform (e.g the BID) that allows town centre businesses a place to network and collaborate to ensure that their business is successful in the town.

170 min

Average dwell time
H2 2021

(VI footfall reports)

Vision:

A place where you belong

“By 2040, Blackpool Town Centre is an **attractive** and **vibrant** place within Britain’s favourite resort. Offering a year-round, high-quality **experience** for residents, visitors and workers from **all walks of life**.

Blackpool Town Centre embraces and builds on its **culture** and **heritage**, is forward looking and **joyful**, with the healthy mix of **credibility**, nostalgia and fun that is **unique** to Blackpool.”

Attractive:	Safe, good quality, physical space, easy of navigation, public transport
Vibrant:	Mixed use offering, public art, day & night offering, events and activations
Experience:	Customer/audience focused, variety
All walks of life:	Inclusivity, accessibility, residents, tourists, workforce, business
Culture:	The arts, performance, social behaviours
Heritage:	History not legacy, protection, assets, urban grain
Joyful:	Fun, pleasure, successful
Credibility:	Sustainable (<i>economic, social and environmental</i>), professional, enforcement, measurability, considered
Unique:	Iconic, distinct, personality

PROPOSITION

**Blackpool Town Centre:
A place where you belong**

OFFER

Blackpool Town Centre is place where the residents of Fylde Coast and visitors for business and pleasure can meet, eat, shop, play, work, learn and do.

AUDIENCE

Residents

Visitors

Businesses

KEY
OBJECTIVES

1. RETAIL

The town centre is home to big brands and independents, serving residents, visitors and workers alike.

2. EXPERIENCE

The town centre has a strong and vibrant entertainment and leisure offering, all with a sense of fun.

3. WORK &
LEARN

The town centre fosters learning and provides opportunities for work from small start-ups to big business.

4. LIVING

The town centre provides high quality, affordable housing, within and around the town centre.

5. CULTURE

The town centre is built on iconic heritage with a healthy offer of arts and culture.

6. CONNECTED

The town centre is well connected (*physical & digital*) and provides for its community, taking care of their safety, security and wellbeing.

PRIORITY
INTERVENTIONS

1. Public realm

4. Events & meanwhile

2. Zoning & districts

5. Culture & entertainment

3. Community

6. Heritage

FOUNDATIONS

Governance & measurement

Investment & partnership
Quality & sustainable

PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS

1. PUBLIC REALM



2. ZONING & DISTRICTS



3. COMMUNITY



4. EVENTS & MEANWHILE



5. CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT



6. HERITAGE



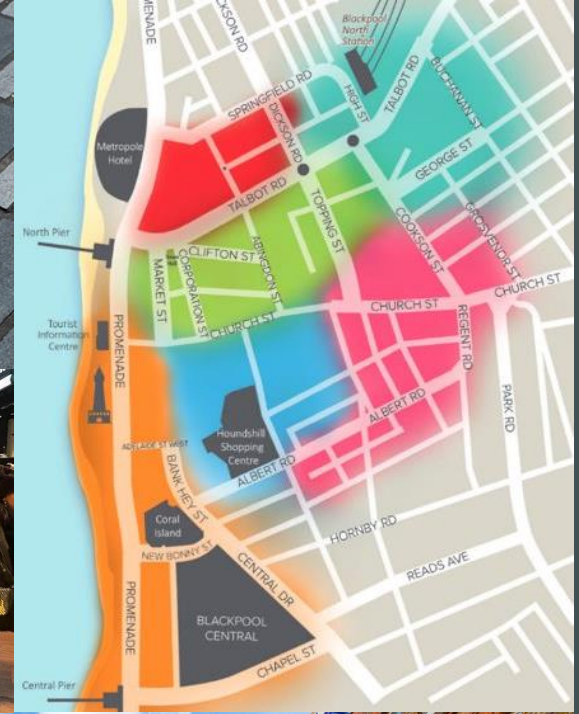
1. Public realm

Inspiration



2. Zoning & districts

Inspiration



3. Community

Inspiration



4. Events & meanwhile

Inspiration

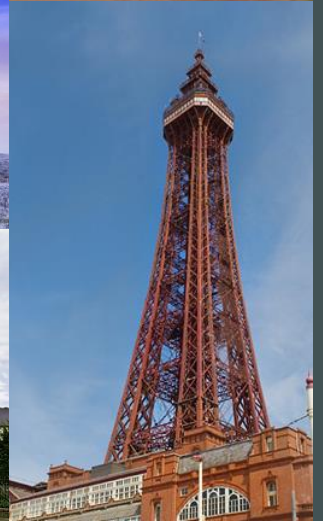


5. Culture & entertainment

Inspiration



6. Heritage



Priority intervention areas and delivery focus

1. Public realm

- i. Streetscape
- ii. Environment
- iii. Illuminate

2. Zoning & districts

- i. Connectivity
- ii. Town centre realignment
- iii. Signage and wayfinding

3. Community

- i. Residents
- ii. Wellbeing
- iii. Social value

4. Events & meanwhile

- i. Events
- ii. Meanwhile initiatives
- iii. Vacant space

5. Culture & entertainment

- i. Storytelling
- ii. Cultural initiatives

6. Heritage

- i. Protection of assets
- ii. Heritage Action Zone

Governance

i. Town Centre Forum

ii. Business Networking

iii. Place Management

iv. Enforcement

Action plan

THEME	INITIATIVE	KEY DELIVERABLES			UNDERWAY / PIPELINE
1. PUBLIC REALM	1A – STREETSCAPE	Resurfacing	Furniture and planting	Promenade gateways	- Quality Corridors Edward Street / Deansgate / Topping St. - Climate emergency action plan - Illuminations upgrade
	1B – ENVIRONMENT	Sustainability	Biophilia		
	1C – ILLUMINATE	Illuminations extension	Street lighting differentiation	Lighting enhancements	
2. ZONING & DISTRICTS	2A – CONNECTIVITY	Pedestrian routes	Cycle paths and public transport	Public realm framework	- Talbot Gateway - Town Centre Access Scheme - Central Business District
	2B – TOWN CENTRE REALIGNMENT	Physical footprint	District personalisation	Open space	
	2C – SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING	Visual appearance	Key entry and decision points	Pedestrian traffic flow	
3. COMMUNITY	3A – RESIDENTS	Quality offer	Civic pride	Perception	- Houndshell leisure development - Residential development (old Cedar Tavern) - Multiversity - Youth Hub
	3B – WELLBEING	Physical wellness	Mental health	Green space	
	3C – SOCIAL VALUE	Investment	Diversity, equity & inclusion	Skills and employability	
4. EVENTS & MEANWHILE	4A – EVENTS	Street pop-ups	St. John’s Square	Specialist street markets	- Blackpool Central - St. Johns Sq events - Lightpool - Live / work unit trials - The Edge
	4B – MEANWHILE INITIATIVES	Community festivals and workshops	Wellness activities	Independents	
	4C – VACANT SPACE	Vacancy strategy	Transform empty units	Creative incubator	
5. CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT	5A – STORYTELLING	Messaging steering group	Culture Blackpool		- Abingdon St. Market (Studios) - Showtown
	5B – CULTURAL INITIATIVES	Performances	Public art and wall art	Strategic partnerships	
6. HERITAGE	6A – PROTECTION OF ASSETS	Heritage building protection	Reflection in new building fabric	Maximising The Grundy	Heritage quarter (Blackpool Central)

Next steps

- The Town Centre Strategy and outline Action Plan was approved by the Council's Executive on May 16th
- Its role is to guide the future direction of strategic development in the town centre, coordinating action and in supporting the development of future funding bids and business cases relating to activity within the town centre boundary; and
- Further engagement will take place with town centre stakeholders and other key partners to complete and finalise the Action Plan, including identification of owners and timelines and governance arrangements. A communications plan will also be prepared.
- Once the Action Plan is completed, the timeline for the annual refresh will be established, and a yearly reporting programme to the Council's Executive