



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council

BLACKPOOL VILLAGE CORE CONCEPT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

CORK CITY COUNCIL CONSULTATION RESPONSE REPORT

This report seeks to clarify aspects of the Blackpool Village Core Concept Design & Implementation Strategy (“the Strategy”) and provide responses to issues raised through the public consultation process, which had strong engagement.

The public consultation documentation can be accessed on Cork City Council’s website:
[Blackpool Village Core - Draft Concept Design Consultation Survey | Cork City Council's Online Consultation Portal](#)

Design amendments arising out of the consultation process will be incorporated into the Final Strategy and associated drawings which is anticipated to be finalised in Q3 2026.

GENERAL QUERIES

What is the Strategy?

The Blackpool Village Core Concept Design & Implementation Strategy is a non-statutory strategy which is focussed on the revitalisation of the Blackpool village core. It represents a shared vision with the community and identifies a number of plan-led public realm projects and activation measures to achieve this vision based on a common understanding of place and community need. The strategy will be available for use by all stakeholders and will be proactively utilised to inform funding applications for the identified projects over the coming years.

Who has prepared the Strategy?

The Strategy is being led by Cork City Council’s Planning and Integrated Development Directorate in partnership with colleagues in the Community & Placemaking Directorate, together with McLaughlin Architects and the Blackpool Village team with wider community inputs.

Why is the Strategy limited to the Village Core?

The scope of the Strategy is the Blackpool village core to enable a focussed concept design approach that optimises delivery potential for the identified projects in accordance with a coherent overall vision, rather than a more general action plan across a wider area.

The need for projects within the village core were identified through the baseline analysis and verified through the consultation process including for central open space, better connectivity east west and economic activation. The opportunity to leverage positive outcomes in conjunction with the community and cultural facilities in this core area is also considered fundamental to maximise regenerative impact and to set the foundation for the successful activation of the identified projects.

A delivery focussed approach was sought by the community and positions Blackpool well for future capital funding opportunities seeking plan-led projects.

Cork City Council will continue to support cross-directorate collaboration in conjunction with the community to manage other issues including operational issues that may arise outside of the scope of this Strategy i.e. waste management, maintenance etc.

What consultation process was undertaken?

The Strategy has been developed in partnership with the Blackpool Village Team from the outset, who were instrumental in its initiation, with in person meetings at every stage throughout. Elected Members from the northeast and northwest local area committees have also been briefed at all plan stages and their contributions incorporated into the process.

The Stage 1 baseline included a number of workshops with key identified community stakeholder groups including local businesses, service providers and Cork City Council departments. An additional engagement event was undertaken with the 5th and 6th class pupils of North Presentation primary school with the support of the Cork City Council RAPID coordinator and an appointed facilitator. It incorporated a guided walk from the primary school to the Graffiti Theatre with an interactive session workshopping barriers and opportunities along the way.

This engagement informed the Draft Strategy which went on public display online and at a community consultation event on May 9th in the Blackpool Community Centre. A total of 176 survey responses were received across the consultation period. 100 submissions were made online and at the consultation event, and 74 survey responses were collected in drop-boxes in the Blackpool Community Centre and O'Shea's pharmacy. Two submissions were by stakeholders, the NTA and the Blackpool Traders Association. In addition to the survey responses, the in-person feedback gathered at the community centre event on 9th May 2026 was analysed to respond to the key issues raised.

How will identified projects and measures be funded?

The preparation of the Strategy has been funded directly by Cork City Council. Its value is in the collective and holistic consideration of a shared vision between the Council and the Community which is broken down into 4 concept projects that can be progressed and delivered independently as funding opportunities arise, to realise this coherent vision.

3 of the projects represent future capital projects i.e. public realm that can be brought forward for funding applications or other capital project delivery mechanisms for their development and delivery. These are the Village Square, Berwick Lane and the Blackpool Gateway.

The 4th project represents 'Enhancing Historic Character and Property/Economic Activation Measures'. This project or action seeks to co-ordinate the ongoing efforts of various teams within the Council to provide focussed supports and the signposting of grants to activate properties and activities in Blackpool for the benefit of residents and local businesses.

When will the projects be delivered?

The Strategy has developed a shared vision for the Blackpool village core broken down into projects that are intended to be pursued independently as funding and opportunities arise, rather than as a single programme requiring simultaneous delivery.

The projects identified within the Strategy are 'concept' designs. They require site acquisition and project development including detailed design to bring them to a shovel ready stage of delivery which will be subject to funding.

The Strategy positions Blackpool well for the application of such funding for plan-led urban regeneration projects.

In the meantime, Cork City Council plans to pilot enhanced property activation supports for the Blackpool village area in Q4 2026 which involves coordinating the advice of Council specialists on the activation of properties and signposting relevant grants and supports.

Delivery of the Village Square project will be subject to the outcome of the Blackpool Flood Relief Scheme which is being led by the Office of Public Works (OPW) with the decision-making powers resting with the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

OVERALL FEEDBACK

How many submissions were received?

176 submissions were received in total. 58 of the submissions did not engage with the survey bar voicing opposition to the Flood Relief Scheme, therefore apart from this issue, which is addressed below, these submissions are not incorporated into the overall feedback analysis.

What is the overall consultation response?

The response was mostly from people who either live, work or have a business in Blackpool Village Core (96% of submissions).

87% of respondents awarded the overall strategy as 3 stars or above, indicating strong overall support.

The ranking of projects shows strong support across all projects with the creation of green spaces ranked the highest.

Overall, the consultation feedback showed strong support for the overall ambition to improve Blackpool village and to create a more attractive, community-focused and people-friendly place. Residents welcomed the ambition for investment in the area and highlighted the village's strong sense of identity and community spirit. Key support was demonstrated for the community café and social spaces, the community garden, improved public realm and landscaping, pedestrian-friendly spaces and heritage interpretation, and celebrating local history.

Key concerns raised included the culverting of the river, parking removal and potential anti-social behaviour.

These issues are addressed in more detail below with responses provided.

KEY ISSUES & RESPONSE

River Bride Culverting

The River Bride emerged as one of the most emotive topics through the public consultation. On the one hand, strong opposition was expressed to the culverting of the River Bride, as shown in the Draft Strategy, and on the other hand the Strategy was opposed because the flooding issue was not yet resolved.

Response:

The responsibility for the design, planning and delivery of the proposed flood defence and protection scheme for Blackpool rests with the Office of Public Works (OPW), the national statutory body responsible for such works, with the decision-making powers resting with the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. Cork City Council is a consultee, like all other stakeholders.

While the Council understands and accepts the concerns of the local community in relation to the culverting issue, it is not within the gift of Cork City Council, nor would it be appropriate, to communicate anything other than what is being proposed publicly by the national body responsible for flood defence.

The Council has engaged constructively with the OPW within the limits of our role in seeking to make improvements to the village square proposals as published (without impacting on the engineering design) for the OPW's consideration and will continue to do so. The Flood Relief Scheme process will continue to be led by the OPW as separate to other proposals identified within the Blackpool Village Core Concept Design and Implementation Strategy.

Green Space, Nature & Biodiversity

The need for meaningful natural green space was the strongest single theme across all responses. Respondents consistently called for genuine natural spaces, biodiversity planting, trees, and nature-based solutions, not just decorative greenery.

Response:

Within the limits of its role, the Council proposes enhanced, multifunctional and site specific landscaping across the proposed projects following the principle of right landscaping in the right place while optimising the provision of eco-system services where possible. This includes a strong focus on the integration of nature based surface water management as a key feature of landscaping proposals throughout.

Careful consideration has been given to utilising landscaping to perform multiple functions and provide a coherency across the village core area in terms of aesthetic greening, segregation from traffic, management of inappropriate parking, wayfinding, biodiversity enhancement, amenity provision and the management of rainfall close to where it falls in line with best practice Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Community Identity, Heritage and Local Character

The public consultation process demonstrated a strong desire to celebrate and preserve Blackpool's distinct identity and history, including references to local figures and historical landmarks.

The Blackpool Traders Association also raised heritage themes, suggesting renaming Tomás Mac Curtain House, relocating his memorial to a more suitable location, and recommending an audit of cultural sites.

Response:

The Strategy is heritage led and has been informed from the outset by a historic character assessment undertaken by a conservation specialist within the consultancy team which, in turn, has guided all proposed projects identified within the Strategy. The Strategy has a strong focus on the conservation, enhancement and adaptive reuse of the existing built heritage including properties and the spaces in between, which is the essence of its special character. Particular suggestions put forward during the public consultation have also been taken on board within the proposed projects.

Examples of heritage focussed elements of the Strategy include:

- Redesigning of the village square to facilitate a more appropriate heritage setting and 'breathing space' for the curtilage of the Church of the Annunciation (Protected Structure);
- Reinstatement of the historic link of Berwick Lane to Assumption Road in order to highlight its heritage value;
- The potential relocation of the Tomás Mac Curtain statue with possible commission for a new more appropriate statue or plaque at the Village Square outside The Pantry;
- Proposals to potentially restore Seamus Murphy's original colour scheme for the Church of Annunciation;
- Activation measures to encourage the sensitive re-use of historic properties including '1-stop shop' advice clinics.

Community Facilities & Social Infrastructure

Responses show a strong appetite for a range of community facilities that serve different ages and needs.

Response:

The Strategy is designed to support and enhance the community facilities and social infrastructure of the Blackpool village core with additional space, better connectivity and the creation of public spaces that can function as meeting and social activity spaces. In accordance with the overarching shared vision, the projects contribute a series of community spaces of various character and function which collectively provide a strong, central and coherent community offering for all ages and interests.

Bus Connects

Opinions on Bus Connects and cycling infrastructure were mixed, with some respondents seeing it as incompatible with village access.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) lodged a submission requesting alignment of the Strategy with the published Bus Connects design.

Response:

The Blackpool Concept Design and Implementation Strategy is a shared effort between Cork City Council and Blackpool citizens which seeks the creation of an enhanced and more attractive village core as a whole based on identified community needs.

Cork City Council has engaged with the NTA on the Strategy and has amended the draft proposals to ensure that the integrity of the NTA proposals are protected to an appropriate degree within the context of the overall Strategy, including the re-introduction of a dedicated cycle line on the Watercourse Road as requested.

Parking, Traffic and Accessibility

Parking, traffic and accessibility came through as a significant concern in the public consultation process, particularly around parking removal on Great William O'Brien Street and access to local services and the Church of the Annunciation.

Response:

The Strategy is a holistic response to a combination of issues in the Blackpool village core. The loss of a limited number of parking spaces in Great William O'Brien Street frees up space for a congregational civic space in a strategic location to the front of the church and adjoining the community centre, while greatly enhancing the overall village square offering and setting for the Church of the Annunciation. It facilitates the creation of amenity areas and green spaces, which will primarily benefit the residents and visitors of Blackpool with associated benefits for biodiversity and natural surface water drainage. While inconvenience for immediately impacted residents is recognised, it is noted that there is a considerable

length of on street parking along Great William O' Brien Street whereby alternative solutions can be explored.

The Strategy does not propose changes to parking spaces on Watercourse Road.

The accessibility of businesses and services remains a priority, and this will be addressed through the following measures:

- The potential relocation of the Tomás Mac Curtain statue would have the benefit of freeing up space in this area, reducing the total loss of parking from 8 to 6 spaces;
- Alternative parking solutions are to be addressed in any project development proposals;
- Disabled parking space locations are to be specifically considered and audited within the Village Square area to ensure suitable provision at project development stage;
- It is an objective that short-stay parking options for businesses and residential permit parking options would be explored through any project development in this area.

Pedestrianisation and Movement

The concept of pedestrianisation received strong support across the survey and in-person event with the pedestrianisation of Berwick Lane receiving the highest degree of prioritisation at the public consultation event. Additional pedestrianisation opportunities were also suggested by respondents.

Response:

The Strategy is based on analysis of the wider movement and traffic network in Blackpool and seeks to significantly enhance the public realm environment of the village core area with a people-centred approach to improved movement and connectivity whilst protecting traffic movements in accordance with the current and future scenarios including Bus Connects.

Particular deficiencies have been identified in relation to east-west pedestrian connectivity both through the village and across the N20 towards Graffiti Theatre and employment locations nearby, including accessibility and safety issues. The Berwick Lane and Blackpool Gateway projects seek to address these issues with the proposed pedestrianisation of Berwick Lane and improvements to Assumption Road including the N20 crossing. It is noted that the concept of an improved N20 crossing has been agreed in principle with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), but that its provision would be subject to detailed assessment at project development stage in conjunction with the operation of nearby junctions given the strategic nature of the road.

The option to pedestrianise the link between Great William O'Brien Street and the Commons Road to the north of the Church is identified as an objective subject to detailed

assessment at project stage. This would greatly enhance the public realm functionality and amenity value of the village square in one of the most attractive locations within the village.

Anti-Social Behaviour & Public Safety

The consultation sessions raised key concerns around both the lack of facilities and spaces as a contributor to anti-social behaviour and the perceived security concerns around the creation of such spaces as proposed in the Strategy, particularly in relation to Berwick Lane.

Response:

Objective 6.18 'Public Open Space' in the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 recognises the need to retain and improve areas of open space for recreation and amenity purposes and that this should "aim to enhance and protect natural features and be set in safe and secure environments". The creation of open space is a key driver of this Strategy in response to identified community need. The concept design has had acute regard to security concerns in leveraging and planning for strong passive surveillance, the co-ordination of integrated activity and physical design considerations including public lighting. Further details on same will be available in the final documentation.

In relation to the proposed Berwick Lane Park, Cork City Council has consulted with the Crime Prevention Officer in An Garda Síochána, whereby it was considered that the park is well positioned to provide a space which could deliver community benefits without a risk of high anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the use of the space and community ownership will be critical to its overall success including its location opposite Cork Community Art Link and adjoining a proposed café as well as future programming and management.

With regard to the proposed space around Cork Community Art Link (CCAL), while the final use is to be determined, it is anticipated that this space would facilitate an externalisation of CCAL's activities which would greatly enhance their operational capacity as well as contribute to the cultural and community atmosphere and offering within the village core. Concerns around the security of this space relative to adjoining residences are acknowledged and can be managed appropriately through the project development process in due course.

Strategic Opportunity Sites: T&A and Corcoran's Quay

Concerns were raised in relation to the identification of "Strategic Opportunity Sites" at T&A and Corcoran's Quay as well as concerns around the progression of Corcoran's Quay and opening of the access onto the N20.

Response:

The Strategy specifically relates to 4 identified projects including a pathway to their activation and delivery. These projects do not include the identified “Strategic Opportunity Sites” namely, T&A and Corcoran’s Quay, however the City Council considers that the strategic location and scale of these sites relative to the central village core merits their recognition within this Strategy and the setting out of key urban design principles for their potential future redevelopment in the context of village core proposals.

The T&A site is recognised as an active business and employer. Corcoran’s Quay is recognised as accommodating a family at present who are in ongoing live discussions with relevant Cork City Council Housing Departments. The Strategy does not directly propose projects on these sites nor interfere with these ongoing processes.