



# Blackpool Town Deal Board meeting 15

## Agenda Item 4 (paper 4.1)

Report to: Blackpool Town Deal Board

Subject: Multiversity land acquisition business case review and recommendation

Relevant Officer: Nick Gerrard, growth and prosperity programme director

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2021

### 1. Multiversity land acquisition (project background)

#### 1.1 Project description

The overall vision is to bring forward regeneration proposals for the creation of a new 'Multiversity campus' in the heart of Blackpool town centre to facilitate the aspirations of Blackpool & the Fylde College (the college) to create a world class university learning environment which will be carbon neutral in operation.

'University Centre Blackpool' (UCB) will be a unique proposition, providing a cutting-edge response to local, regional, and national priorities delivered by the college. Through a high quality, dedicated and distinctive technical and professional curriculum, co-created with employers and in partnership with Lancaster University, UCB will support high level skills growth and individual success, now and in the future. With courses focusing on automation, mobility, artificial intelligence, data, population ageing and sustainability, the Multiversity will focus on training, learning and education opportunities for regional businesses to up-skill their workforces.

The college's relocation from their existing University Centre campus on Park Road to a new carbon neutral in operation campus building in the town centre will improve education, skills and learning in Blackpool and the wider area.

The Multiversity will also provide a major contribution to the regeneration of Blackpool town centre.

The new Multiversity campus has been designed to accommodate over 3,600 learners.

The Multiversity campus is underpinned by six key project objectives:



1. Injection of a new life to the heart of Blackpool.
2. Embed holistically into the town centre.
3. Allow people to up-skill through life.
4. Raise the college profile in the town and beyond.
5. Create an iconic building that sings Blackpool.
6. Increase footfall in the town centre to encourage regeneration.

Key project inputs:

- Towns Fund Project: £9m towns fund investment to acquire existing properties and clear the proposed site for development to strengthen Blackpool's higher education offer and regenerate the town centre.
- Proposed main Multiversity campus project: £85m total investment (which includes the £9m town fund investment above), in a world class learning facility at the heart of Blackpool town centre on a cleared 1 hectare site.

## 1.2 Rationale and need for scheme

The college's existing university centre campus at Park Road in Blackpool is situated away from the town centre amenities and rail network and as such is disconnected from the core of the town.

The college needs to relocate from its current campus to realise its full potential in collaboration with Lancaster University as UCB.

It is not economically viable to repurpose the existing campus buildings and there is insufficient site capacity for the additional floor space that is required to achieve the vision of the UCB.

The college is therefore looking for a new campus site and is seeking to relocate from their existing campus to a new site which is located on the edge of Blackpool town centre. The site measures approximately 1 hectare which is the land area needed to meet UCB's operational requirements. The site is located 350m from the train station close to the new civil service hub. It is not only close to Blackpool North station but also the new tramway on Talbot Road which will combine at an interchange with Blackpool North. The proposed site and illustrations of the Multiversity campus are shown in appendix 3.1 of the business case.



A rigorous appraisal of a long list of potential sites was undertaken during the Multiversity campus study (see report in appendix 4.1 of the business case) to determine the preferred location for the Multiversity in Blackpool Town Centre.

The following site area and anticipated building area requirement informed the assessment:

- Anticipated net usable area: 9,944 square metre.
- Anticipated approximate total building area: 17,523 square metre.

Design options for the Multiversity have been informed by a detailed academic brief from the college.

A preferred option that best meets the college's design aspirations for the Multiversity has been selected and this is being worked up as a masterplan that will be presented in the Multiversity campus final report in October 2021.

### 1.3 Project deliverables

Project outputs:

- 17,500 square metre new space for teaching, learning and business and community partnerships.
- Boost in skills and education levels, employment, and employment opportunities.
- Growth in town centre footfall and £4.2m annual spend from 3,000+ students will increase business turnover across the town centre, supporting improved business profitability.
- The delivery of a modern and more desirable town will bring investor confidence in Blackpool, with improved profitability potential among proximate sites bringing potential for acceleration.
- The improved reputation of Blackpool as a place to study and live will resonate with the local housing market.

## Outcomes and impacts

1. National scale impacts:
  - Productivity improvements from higher skilled labour.
  - Uplift in land and asset values among directly delivered development.
  - Improved viability among wider town centre development opportunities.
  - Uplifts within local commercial and housing markets.
  - Welfare returns from improved labour supply.
  - Increased public transport use and active travel, and associated benefits.
2. Local scale impacts:
  - 493 construction job years.
  - 190 longer-term FTE jobs in the town centre.
  - £35m construction related GVA impacts.
  - 680 more higher education students per year.

### 1.4 Funding profile

The cost of acquiring the properties and clearing the site for the development of the Multiversity campus is estimated as follows:

- Cost to purchase all the properties: £8,800,000.
- Utility and infrastructure costs: £200,000.

The total cost is £9 million and the table below shows a Town Fund capital value drawdown by Blackpool council from MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) over 5 years, starting in 2021/ 2022 and ending in 2024/ 2025.

The majority of the drawdown is in 2022/ 2023 and 2023/ 2024 when most of the property purchases take place. These dates align with the agreed Multiversity campus delivery programme which shows that the site will need to be cleared by mid-2023. This allows

sufficient time for the new Multiversity campus to be built and then opened in September 2025, which is agreed date for the Multiversity to open.

Fund Source	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024	2024/ 2025	2024/ 2026	Total
Towns Fund	£515,000	£5,545,000	£2,865,000	£45,000	£30,000	£9,000,000
Total	£515,000	£5,545,000	£2,865,000	£45,000	£30,000	£9,000,000

## 2. Annexes

There are three documents annexed to this report which provide further detail:

1. Annex paper 4.1A: the Town Deal Investment Panel report including the independent appraiser's summary of the project business case provided to the TDIP panel on 27 October 2021. This provides:
  - A summary review of the 5 business case elements within the project business case highlighting strong performing areas and also any areas that would benefit from further attention or discussion.
  - A series of overarching recommendations provided to the TDIP panel for initial review and consideration and the TDIP panel's recommendations to the Town Deal Board.
2. Annex paper 4.1B: full Genecon business case appraisal.
3. Annex paper 4.2: Land acquisition for Multiversity full business case (without appendices).

## 3. Recommendation

That the Board confirm that they are satisfied that the business case assessment process was thorough and robust and approve the Multiversity business case for sign off by Blackpool Council and Chair of the Town Deal Board, for onward submission to DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities).