

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This Neighbourhood Profile sets out the current social, economic and physical position of the North Beach neighbourhood, which will inform and guide future regeneration in the area over the medium to long term. It provides the core baseline conditions, context and key issues that will inform the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for North Beach.

1.2 This section provides a summary of the key facts and issues to arise from the Neighbourhood Profile, presenting a snapshot of the North Beach area

Location and Spatial Context

- The North Beach Area covers some 13.1 hectares
- In Summer 2008, the main land uses were:
 - Hotel and Holiday Accommodation 49.2% (58.7% when including Holiday flats and mixed use holiday accommodation)
 - Residential 26.1%

- Although the Council owns some key surface car park sites, most of the land is in multiple private ownership
- North Beach lies adjacent to a wider programme of regeneration and key projects including the Talbot Gateway, which will be influential on the development of the area.

Community Profile

North Beach displays the following characteristics:

- At the time of the 2001 census the area had a population of 1481, equivalent to 1% of Blackpool's population
- Comparatively, the area has a high proportion of elderly (65+) and young adults between 20-44 years.
- A notably higher proportion of men than women
- A low representation of ethnic groups (but this could have potentially changed due to recent immigration of EU migrants)
- The area has moved up the overall IMD ranking, between 2004 and 2007, from 198th worst to 121st most deprived ward in England. Employment, Crime and The Living Environment within the North Beach area are ranked particularly high, all of

which have progressively deteriorated over the 3 year period between the IMD records.

- Large proportion of self employed residents in the service industry reflecting the tourist related hotels, B&Bs and businesses.
- A low level of managerial and higher professions
- Low wage levels
- Most people live in single households in privately rented, converted or purpose built flats, bedsits or small terraced housing.
- Poor health and Limiting Long Term Illness is a barrier to work for residents within North Beach
- Just under half of the residents in the area have no formal qualifications and those that do have comparatively low educational attainment.
- Migration of residents both to and from the area, principally from other neighbourhoods across Inner Blackpool
- A high proportion of residents with no private transportation (car or van)
- A low proportion of family households

Historic Environment

- The historical development of North Beach can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century
- The development of the area was prompted by growing demand for visitor accommodation in the resort, and led by the opening of North Pier in 1863
- The development of Dickson Road took place gradually during the last quarter of the 19th century, with terraces of large lodging houses built in the 1870s on the west side towards the south end, but the east side not developed until the c.1900.
- The study area has a strong Victorian built heritage

Townscape and Heritage

- The spatial character of the area is uniformly dense, with a regular, tight urban grain and a strong sense of enclosure in the streetscene
- There have been few changes to the historic density of the area. Any recent infill built has generally respected the historic building lines, appearance and height of existing buildings. However, there are cleared surface car park sites within the area.

- The development of the area has facilitated linear views and long vistas, particularly along Dickson Road and some of the streets to the east off the Promenade
- Opportunities exist to improve the physical appearance of the area through both building and public realm work
- A number of historical buildings have been selected for a potential Local List. These include the north end of the former Lansdowne Crescent, the Carlton and Metropole Hotels along with the Baptist Tabernacle on Springfield Road
- Streets of overall positive value include Springfield Road, Dickson Road, and parts of Lord Street and High Street.
- There is only one listed building in the area and two immediately adjacent. Although there is no Designated Conservation Area, North Beach lies adjacent to the Town Centre Conservation Area.
- Although there are some buildings of architectural merit, some have been lost or have diminished by poor quality and unsympathetic building additions and alterations.
- There is a notable absence of green open space and no private residential gardens
- The quality of the built environment is uniformly poor.

Housing

- In 2001 there were 744 households located in North Beach, a figure which represents 1.16% of all housing stock across Blackpool
- Low provision of family type detached and semi detached housing
- Majority of people live in single or two person households (over 85%)
- Most accommodation is rented through private landlords (48.79%) which represents just under half the total number of households.
- Owner occupation is very low by national standards (30.38%)
- An indication of relatively poor internal amenities when compared to national position
- Housing prices are lower than both the regional and national average. house prices have fallen more rapidly in Blackpool than regionally and nationally since the economic downturn in the economy
- Suspected high level of illegal Housing in Multiple Occupation throughout the study area

- The majority of stock is in poor external condition

Local Market Assessment

- Despite strong growth through much of 2007, prospects for the UK economy in 2008 are seen to be considerably weaker due to a number of factors including the credit crunch and continued pressure on inflation
- Blackpool's economy is still heavily reliant on the Tourism industry, despite declining visitor numbers in recent years.
- Blackpool's economy is classed as performing poorly in terms of Gross Value Added, with the town ranking 23rd lowest among the 133 GVA Nuts 3 areas in the UK.
- The town centre retail market is characterised by a higher than national average vacancy rate, However, conditions have improved following the opening of Hounds Hill Shopping Centre in summer 2008.
- Office and Industrial markets on the Fylde Coast are weak due to low levels of business formation in recent years. However, the take-up of business land in 2006-2007 was stronger than in any other of the past five financial years due to the success of Blackpool Business Park.

- There has been little growth in office space in recent years, despite aspirations to double major office employment in the town centre by 2012.
- The commercial context within North Beach is dominated by hotels and other holiday accommodation.
- Industrial uses include an auto repair workshop and a self-storage facility
- The decline in tourism has affected North Beach significantly with the proportion of holiday properties on the market within North Beach increasing by nearly 14% over a 2 year period.
- The retail market is confined mainly to fast food takeaways and a scattering of local shops, while a limited amount of office space is available above retail premises.

Sustainability and the Environment

- None of the North Beach area lies within Flood Risk Zones 1, 2 and 3, as identified by the Environment Agency. Potential risk of flooding is therefore minimal.
- North Beach is heavily urbanised with no meaningful green open space or recreation areas with resulting impacts on community well-being and biodiversity

- The micro climate of North Beach, with strong salt laden prevailing winds, presents challenges with regard to the use of construction materials and landscaping works such as tree planting
- National and local planning policies require North Beach to be regenerated as a sustainable community
- Evidence from previous sections of this profile document indicate that North Beach is not currently sustainable, for instance:
 - there is limited open space
 - the housing offer is limited
 - employment is dominated by the declining tourism sector
 - there are significant social and health problems

Transport and Movement

- North Beach is well served by public transport links, being close to the train and bus stations, while the tram service, currently undergoing renovation, runs along the coast through the west of the study area.

- There is a lack of long stay parking provision, a problem exacerbated by the fact that many hotels and other holiday accommodation do not have sufficient provision for guests.
- There are a number of safety issues relating to road layouts, particularly around Dickson Road and Springfield Road. The quality of the road surfaces, particularly to the west of Dickson Road, is also poor.

Community Infrastructure

- The quality and range of community facilities in the North Beach area is generally poor
- There are no schools within the area (although they are within a reasonable distance)
- There are no open/amenity space or play areas
- There are no purpose built community or leisure centres within the area although there are several religious buildings which provide space for community groups
- Public Houses are the main form of leisure offer in the area
- Many community Services are not accessible within the area

Regeneration and Policy Context

- Regeneration proposals for the North Beach area need to be consistent with a wide range of national, regional and local planning policies and investment strategies
- Proposals for an Area Action Plan (AAP) in South Beach are contained in the Council's approved Local Development Scheme (LDS)
- The preparation of Area Action Plans must follow government guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement 12: creating strong safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning (PPS12)
- The North Beach area already benefits from a number of key strategies hence the context for regeneration is already in place
- The study area falls within the area covered by the Urban Regeneration Company "ReBlackpool"

Utilities and Physical Infrastructure

To be completed