Code of practice for highway safety inspections

Last Modified October 13, 2025

How to search the page

iOS Safari – tap the action icon (square with arrow at bottom of screen) and select 'find on page' from the list of options.
Other mobile browsers – tap the browser's options menu (usually 3 dots or lines) and select 'find on page' from the options.
CTRL + F on your keyboard (Command + F on a Mac)
This will open a search box on the page. Type the word you are looking for in the search box and press enter. The word will then be highlighted wherever it appears in the guidance. Use the navigation in the search box to move to the next word found.

How to print a copy of the page

iOS Safari – tap the action icon (square with arrow at bottom of screen) and select 'print' from the list of options.
Other mobile browsers – tap the browser's options menu (usually 3 dots or lines) and select 'print' or select 'share' from the list of options, then 'print' in the popup.
CTRL + P on your keyboard (Command + P on a Mac)
You have an option to print the entire page, or select a page range.

Introduction

Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty on highway authorities to maintain highways maintainable at public expense. Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 provides the highway authority with a special defence if it can demonstrate that it undertakes and implements the findings of cyclic highway safety inspections on its' maintainable highway network.

The purpose of this code of practice is to ensure best practice in the inspection of the highway network, to both support the council in defence of potential claims and assist in the development and implementation of the network preventative highway maintenance programme for Blackpool, within the context of asset management and the statutory duty of network management.

The document Well-managed Highways Infrastructure, A Code of Practice October 2016, produced by the Roads Liaison Group, makes recommendations for surveys and inspections of adopted highway networks. This document, Blackpool Council's "Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspections", is based on the Well- managed Highways Infrastructure, A Code of Practice October 2016 taking into account local conditions, constraints and demands and is to be read in conjunction with the Blackpool Council "Highways Risk Register which is included in this document and relevant highway maintenance policy". This document also takes into account standards set out in similar codes of practice in other highway authorities. As members of CIPFA Blackpool Council highways also considered recommendation from CIPFA when preparing this code of practice.

The Roads Liaison Group (RLG) Well-managed Highways Infrastructure, A Code of Practice October 2016 makes recommendations in sections A4, A5 and B5 for surveys and inspections. It outlines different types of inspections:

- Safety Inspections
- Reactive inspections
- Service Inspections
- Condition surveys
- Assessment of structures

The RLG code recognises that different types of inspections can be undertaken simultaneously. Blackpool's methodology however is to undertake safety inspections as one process to enable inspectors to focus on defects which if not repaired, are likely to become a potential danger.

The main objectives of the code are:

1. Network safety
2. Network serviceability
3. Network sustainability

Section 1- Overview

Status of the code

The main relevant definitions are:

- The term ‘carriageway’ is used for facilities used by motor vehicles
- The term ‘footway’ is used for segregated surfaced facilities used by pedestrians. The term ‘footpath’ is retained for other forms of Public Rights of Way and bridleway (PROW)
- The term “cycleway” is used for designated areas for use by cyclists, either segregated surfaces on carriageways or footways

Arrangements for updating and review

The code gives due regard to the council’s duties and has taken reference from other similar codes of good practice along with appropriate legislation and benchmarking against other councils with similar objectives. The code is periodically reviewed in team meetings for the purpose of continuous improvement.

Changing flagged footway (modular) construction to flexible construction

Blackpool Council implements a policy of changing “flags to flex” as part of its robust strategy to minimise repair costs and gain long term improvement in the condition of the footway network. High amenity prestige/conservation areas will be treated on a case by case basis when discussions/decisions on the use of modular materials will be made.

Problems that can arise through modular construction include;

- Differential settlement between flags (tripping hazard)
- Damage to flags due to vehicle over-ride
- Weakening of foundation due to water ingress through open joints
- “Loosening”/displacement of flags due to tree roots

The flexible macadam construction being used gives greater strength and flexibility to the footway surface, thus significantly reducing the problems identified above. Certain footways suffer from considerable vehicle over-ride in the area immediately adjacent to the kerb line. Consideration will be given to constructing a “flexible strip”, adjacent to the kerb line, strengthening this area to cope with the vehicle over-ride, in isolation from the rest of the footway.

Section 2 – Objectives

Corporate objectives

The main purpose of highway maintenance is to ensure the network is safe for the highway user for movement of people and goods. This purpose is set within the corporate objectives of Blackpool Council. It is the intention of this code of practice to carry out highway inspections to the frequencies shown, in table 1 for the local code.

Section 3 - Management systems and records

The efficiency, accuracy and quality of information together with records maintained, is crucial both to the effective management of the service and the defence of claims against the council for alleged failure.

Reference should be made to the code of practice for maintaining claim defence, which includes the following:

- Records of inspection records of adopted highways
- Records of condition
- Records of maintenance activity
- Road accidents data

Risk management

The management of highway maintenance, including the establishment of regimes for inspection, setting levels of service, determining

priorities and programmes and procuring the service, are all undertaken against a clear and comprehensive understanding and assessment of the risks and consequences involved. Blackpool Council's safety inspection regime uses a risk assessment approach that provides a practical and reasonable approach to the risks and potential consequences identified. It is viewed in the same light as a safety audit and treated accordingly. The inspection regime takes account of potential risks to all road users, and in particular those most vulnerable.

The risk management criteria used are as follows:

1. Identify the hazard
2. Identify likelihood or risk
3. Identify control measures
4. Record defect details
5. Review on future inspections

A highway defect is identified predominantly using two factors:

1. The measurement/depth
2. The likelihood that this measurement (because of its location) would present a hazard

When these two factors are applicable at any location a defect will be identified i.e. the measurement at the defect meets or exceeds the defined criteria and it is likely that an accident could occur.

Section 4 - Inspector training

Blackpool Council is committed to continual staff development and training. The council has established a highway training programme, which is constantly reviewed with the inspection team, to meet team training needs, in line with the code of practice objectives. All highway inspectors carrying out safety inspections also have an annual individual performance appraisal during which on-going training needs are identified and discussed. Each member of the inspection team attends regular briefing session with the line manager and regular moderation exercises are arranged to ensure consistent inspection standards are maintained throughout the town. Newly appointed safety inspectors spend a period of time with experienced colleagues from the Inspection team before carrying out inspections alone.

The inspector's training is as follows:

- Job induction (including tour of work site and details of materials used)
- Job shadowing
- Individual performance appraisals
- Regular team meetings (to discuss any new developments and areas for improvement)
- Any courses relevant to the job
- All safety inspectors are required to undertake highway safety inspectors' modula training course to be placed on the IHE register of highway
- All highway inspectors are required to obtain a supervisor level accreditation as required by the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991

Section 5 - Safety inspections

Inspection regime

The council's method of inspection, assessment and recording, include the following and have been defined following an assessment of the relative risks: The parameters for a safety inspection regime are:

- Frequency of inspection
- Items for inspection
- Degree of deficiency
- Nature of response

The Inspection, assessment and recording regime provides the basic information for addressing the key objectives of highway maintenance strategy, which are network safety, serviceability and sustainability.

Safety inspections sources

Safety defects derive from two main sources:

1. Planned cyclic safety inspections to identify potential dangers
2. Reactive safety inspections following complaints in respect of the condition of the highway. Records of cyclic safety inspections

and safety inspections following complaints are maintained on the highway computer database

Types of safety inspections

Walked inspections

Walked safety inspections are undertaken by a highway inspector wearing appropriate PPE and undertaking relevant risk assessment and they cover all aspects of highways assets.

Cycle inspections

Cycle safety inspections are undertaken by a highway inspector from a bi-cycle wearing appropriate PPE and undertaking relevant risk assessments. They are generally undertaken from footways, with the permission of the local police force, or from cycle ways and cover all aspects of highways assets as per walked inspections. They are to be undertaken at slow speeds with regular stops to review sections as required. These will be undertaken on streets where it is more appropriate to undertake cycle inspections then either walked or driven inspections.

Driven inspections

Driven safety inspections will take place on selected streets within Blackpool, these streets generally either have no footway for a walked inspection or the footways do not require as great a frequency of inspection as the carriageways. The driven inspections of these streets will be focused on the carriageway and where there is a footway associated with these streets the footways will be inspected on a walked inspection along with the carriageway at the frequency required for the particular footway.

Driven inspections will be undertaken by a team of two inspectors with the driver concentrating solely on driving. The vehicle used will have 'Highways Maintenance' signs and a roof mounted hazard warning light on it. The highways inspectors will be wearing PPE appropriate to speed limits of 40mph+ on those inspections which have speed limits in excess of 40mph. The vehicle will be slow moving never exceeding 15mph with driver and spotter both wearing seat belts as required by law.

Digital inspections

These are to be undertaken using the digital inspection vehicles and procedure.

Inspection frequencies

Frequencies for safety inspections of individual network sections are based upon consideration of:

- Guidance from the RLG code
- Local conditions, constraints or demands
- Category within the network hierarchy
- Traffic use, characteristics and trends, (actual vehicle and pedestrian count information will be used). Guidance has been taken from the Development of a Risk Analysis Model for footways and cycle tracks (PPR 171) Transport Research Laboratory
- Characteristics of adjoining network elements
- Wider policy or operational consideration

Although the category within the hierarchy, in combination with traffic use, is the main determinant of inspection frequency, other factors are taken into account in deciding whether consideration is given to increasing or reducing the frequency. Using these variant factors, an on-site ‘reality check is undertaken where there is any uncertainty about the category to be applied. For example:

- Road use might be at the margin of the category but have higher than normal levels of growth
- Extensive development may be taking place or planned, the section might have a higher than normal level of accidents or related incidents, which could suggest unusually high levels of risk
- Although traffic flows on the carriageway might be low, there might be high levels of pedestrians or cyclists (traffic composition)
- The route might be the subject of promotion by the council for example as a ‘Safer Route to School’ or access to a railway station
- In urban areas, it may be desirable to combine footway and carriageway inspections to mitigate against problems associated with heavy traffic and parked cars
- There could be significant variations in either vehicle, pedestrian traffic or both outside the holiday season

Safety inspections are carried out to specified frequencies, dependent upon the status of each highway.

In some circumstances it is possible that the specified frequencies cannot be met, for example adverse weather conditions, so for this reason a tolerance in the frequency of inspections is permitted.

Adopted back atreets

There are many adopted back atreets within Blackpool. Most of these are gated and are minor streets which only residents and people

with gate keys have access to. These are well known to the people who use them and as such only require limited routine inspections due to the nature of the street and the fact most defects are reported ad-hoc by the users of the back streets. These streets will therefore be inspected on a biennial basis.

Table 1: footway hierarchy table

Category	Description	Inspection frequency	Example daily count
Prestige walking zones	Very busy areas of town with high public space and streetscene contribution.	Monthly	1,001 to 10,000
Primary walking routes	Busy shopping and business areas and main pedestrian routes.	Monthly	1,001 to 10,000
Secondary walking routes	Medium usage routes through local areas feeding into primary routes, local shopping centres etc	Quarterly	501 to 1,000
Link footways	Linking local access footways through urban areas and busy rural footways	Six monthly	201 to 500
Local access footways	Footways associated with low usage, short estate roads to the main routes and cul-de-sacs.	Annual	0 to 200
Minor footways	Little used footways serving very limited numbers of properties, footways in gated alleyways	Biennial	0 to 100

Table 2: carriageway hierarchy table

Category	Description	Inspection frequency	Example daily count
Motorway	Routes for fast moving long distance traffic. Fully grade separated and restrictions on use	Monthly	None
Strategic	Routes for fast moving long distance traffic with little frontage access or pedestrian traffic. Speed limits are usually in excess of 40mph and there are few junctions. Pedestrian crossings are either segregated or controlled and parked vehicles are generally prohibited.	Monthly	8000 to 25000
Main distributor	Routes between strategic routes and linking urban centres to the strategic network with limited frontage access. Speed limits are usually 40mph or less, parking is restricted at peak times and there are positive measures for pedestrian safety.	Monthly	8000 to 25000
Secondary distributor	Speed limits usually 20 or 30mph speed with very high levels of pedestrian activity and some crossing facilities i.e. zebra crossings. On-street parking is generally unrestricted except for safety reasons. Bus routes and HGV generators to the strategic and main distributor network.	Monthly	8000 to 25000
Link road	Usually residential or industrial interconnecting roads with 20 or 30 mph speed limits, random pedestrian movements and uncontrolled parking.	Quarterly	1500 to 8000
Minor link	Usually residential or industrial interconnection roads with lower usage.	Six monthly	1000 to 2000

Local access road	Usually residential or industrial roads serving properties adjacent or in the immediate vicinity.	Annual	0 to 1500
Minor road	Little used roads serving limited number of properties, back alleyways	Biennial	0 to 500

Table 3: cycleway hierarchy table

Category	Description	Frequency
On carriageway lane (marked)	Cycle lane forming part of the carriageway, commonly a strip adjacent to nearside kerb. Cycle gaps at road closure point	As per carriageway frequency
Cycle track	Cycle track- a highway route for cyclists not contiguous with the public footway or carriageway. Shared cycle/pedestrian paths, either segregated by a white line or other physical segregation or un-segregated	Annual or as per footway frequency
On carriageway lane (not marked)	Cycle provision on carriageway, other than a marked cycle lane or marked cycle provision, where cycle flows are significant.	As per carriageway frequency
Cycle trails	Cycle trails, leisure routes through open spaces. These are not necessarily the responsibility of the highway authority, but may be maintained by the authority under other powers or duties.	Not inspected by Highways.

Tolerances

Because of the effect of weather, it is possible that the specified frequencies cannot be met in some circumstances. For this reason a tolerance in the frequency of inspections is permitted as follows:

Table 4: tolerances

Specified frequency	Tolerance
12 times per year (monthly routes)	6 working days
2 times per year (6 monthly routes)	15 working days
4 times per year (quarterly routes)	10 working days
Once per year (annual routes)	30 working days
Every 2nd year (biennial routes)	60 working days

Table 5: local safety inspection frequency for adopted back alleys and cycle ways

Local code (taking into account local conditions, constraints and demands)

Use	Category	Category description	Frequency	Tolerance

Adopted back street	Town centre back streets (A)	(A) Used to service high numbers of commercial premises and used by general public	1 month	6
Adopted back streets	Gated back streets (B)	(B) No access for the general public. Used predominantly by residents as low usage amenity. Gates kept locked for extensive periods	24 months	60
Adopted back streets	Other back streets (C)	(C) Predominantly used by the residents with low level use by the general public	24 months	60
Cycle route	On road cycle route	Cycle lane forming part of the carriageway (road)	As for applicable road category	See applicable road category
Cycle route	Off road cycle track	Cycle route for cyclists not contiguous with the public carriageway or footway	6 months	15
Cycle trail	Off road cycle trails	Leisure routes/trails through open spaces	12 months	30

Note:

In back alleyways with designated footways normal Investigation measurements apply.

The vast majority of back streets, however, do not have separate footways. Applying a risk assessments the alleyways are generally well known by the users and have a very low footfall. These back alleys shall be treated as carriageways in terms of defining defects for treatment/action.

Enquiry traces (ad-hoc inspections)

Ad-hoc inspections will be carried out to identify any required maintenance works following customer complaints/requests.

Emergency complaints/requests relating to a defect on the highway will be inspected within 5 working days. Non-emergency complaints/requests relating to a defect on the highway will be inspected within 25 working days. All details of ad-hoc inspections are recorded on the council system (ESB). Any identified defect will be treated in the same way as those identified through planned cyclic safety inspections.

Grass verges and grassed areas

The council carries out routine maintenance of grass verges which mainly consists of grass cutting. In some situations the council will undertake soil and seeding or perhaps infilling areas of verges with plaining materials at the inspector's discretion. Also as an alternative to placing posts in verges to prevent vehicle override the council will look at placing some temporary concrete cubes onto problematic verges.

The council will not accept any liability in respect of tripping incidents located on grass verges or grassed areas. It is reasonable to expect that these are areas where people should not be expected to walk as it is normal practice for pedestrians to make use of the recognised crossing point facilities.

Skid resistance

Within Blackpool skid resistance testing is routinely carried out on the critical network as identified below, plus site specific testing anywhere on the network where the surfacing is suspect or where there is a history of wet skid accidents.

Critical network

The critical network comprises all principal A roads (local roads), all B class roads and those C class and unclassified roads which are more heavily trafficked, have relatively high HGV flows, form major diversion routes or have characteristics similar to carriageway details given in Table 1. of Section A.4.3.11.for main distributor and secondary distributor in the Well-Managed Highway

Infrastructure- Code of Practice October 2016 . In addition some routes with a known accident history shall be considered for routine assessment irrespective of their traffic loading or strategic importance.

Routine and site-specific testing

Routine and site-specific testing will be undertaken using a Grip Tester Mk 2. Following data processing a list of prioritised sites is produced for signing and/or further investigation as appropriate. There may be isolated occasions when a Pendulum skid resistance tester may be used.

Section 6 - Repair and response times (standards of service)

Repair and response times – defect risk assessment

When deciding on the response times for repairs the Highway Inspectors will undertake a risk assessment for each defect. See table 7 for the response times of repairs and see pages 17 and 18 for further information on defect risk assessment.

Repair Response Times

Table 7 Response Time

RLG code category	Local category	Response time	Action
1	1	Within 24 hours	Require prompt attention because the defect presents an immediate/imminent hazard/risk. In some instances the defect made be made safe within 24 hours followed by a permanent repair within 5 working days
2(H)	2	Within 5 working days	Defect does not present an immediate/imminent hazard/risk but which, if not attended to within a short period of time would deteriorate further and thus create a higher risk.
2(M)	3	Within 5 weeks	Defect identified presents no imminent risk. Work to be included within future planned/pending works programmes. This programme of work is managed by taking into account the safety of users of the highway along with constraints placed upon it by the available limited budgets.
2(L)	4	Include for consideration within future planned maintenance programmes	Highway or footway conditions which currently do not present any hazard/risk to highway users, but would be considered for inclusion within the future capital programme e.g. a programme of small area carriageway patching, footway “flags to flex programme”. These types of planned works contribute to the long term maintenance of the highway network improvements, helping to achieve design lives and minimise the maintenance costs of the highways asset in terms of whole life costs. Note – these are not safety defects and are not actionable

Categorising defects

When categorising a defect all of the following are taken into consideration:-

- Nature and severity of the defect
- Measurement of the defect
- Risk assessment linked to each defect
- Location of the defect within the footway, carriageway, cycle route or back street
- Type of highway and it’s usage
- Type of amenity served by the highway g. hospitals, schools, retirement homes etc

Table 8 Investigation levels

Type	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Footways	Collapse of footway/area of back street. Missing ironwork covers Missing flags or other modular paving Tripping hazards in footways / back streets ≥25mm with a high probability of a risk occurring Dangerously rocking flags. Damaged bollards, railings or posts that present an immediate hazard to pedestrians. Missing kerbs in areas where pedestrians are likely to cross. Depressions or ridges ≥25mm over 600mm with a high probability of a risk occurring.	Differences in levels ≥25mm on priority walking routes?? Rocking flags that could create a trip ≥25mm Damaged bollards, railings or posts dependent on severity Depressions or ridges ≥25mm over 600mm	Differences in levels ≥25m on all other routes?? Rocking flags that could create a trip ≥25mm. Damaged bollards, railings or posts dependent on severity. Depressions or ridges ≥25mm over 600mm	Cracked/broken flags presenting no hazard. Flexible footway areas/back streets showing signs of fretting, cracking etc. Loss of jointing material between modular slabs. Footway areas subject to vehicle over-ride, without currently presenting hazards to pedestrians. Flagged footways where displacement between flags is currently <25mm
Carriageway (c/w)	Collapse of C/w area. Missing ironwork covers. Potholes in the c/w with a depth ≥60mm Differences in levels of c/w ≥40mm with a high probability of a risk occurring. Depressions or ridges ≥40mm over 600mm with a high probability of a risk occurring.	Differences in levels of c/w ≥40mm dependant on severity Depressions or ridges ≥40mm over 600mm dependant on severity	Differences in levels of c/w ≥40mm dependant on severity. Depressions or ridges ≥40mm over 600mm dependant on severity	Crazing/cracking of c/w surface. Fretting of c/w surface. Polishing of surface course aggregate. Tracking/rutting with deformation Road markings, dependent upon type of road marking.
Cycle routes	As per c/w	As per c/w	As per c/w	As per c/w

Investigation levels

- Measurement
- Footway defects ≥25mm
- Carriageway defects ≥40mm
- Carriageway defects at designated pedestrian crossing points ≥25mm (for illustrated view see Appendix A)
- Back Alleyway defects ≥40mm unless there is a separate
- The inspectors can use a degree of discretion when assessing defects

Likelihood

- Normal direction of travel for pedestrians
- Normal area of footway used by pedestrians e.g. 300mm in from physical boundaries such as property walls or street furniture

within the footway. A degree of discretion is used by the inspectors as issues such as collapses and defective apparatus will be reported within the 300mm zone

- Damaged kerbs on straight sections, unless at designated pedestrian crossing points, are regarded as a demarcation point between the footway and carriageway and therefore generally should not be walked on. Defects will be treated at the carriageway investigation level
- Kerbs around tree pits are classified as street furniture and not a defect
- Carriageway deterioration at the kerb edge will only be picked up if it's wider than 100mm

Street Furniture

Where possible the removal of street furniture is encouraged.

Defects and repairs associated with utility and other third party apparatus

Missing/damaged utility ironwork covers – formally notified to the utility/3rd party concerned within/by defined timeframes/format. The defect is also recorded on the DCD by the inspector as part of the inspection. A follow up procedure is then implemented, to ensure that remedial action has been taken by the utility/3rd party concerned within the prescribed timescales.

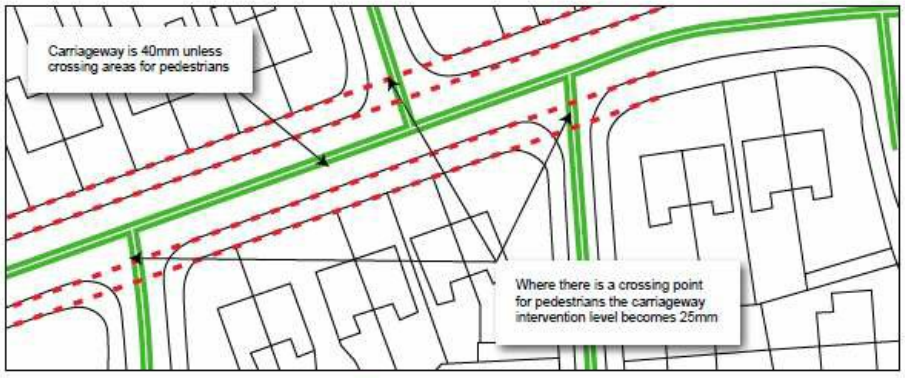
In some cases where there is a partial collapse of the highway it may not be evident whether this is as a result of a defective drain/drain connection, which could be the responsibility of the highway authority, a utility company or private 3rd party. In such cases the highway authority will make the area safe and then undertake investigatory excavations to help to determine the ownership of the defective apparatus. If it is a highway surface water drain that has failed then the council will complete all necessary works/reinstatement. Where the apparatus belongs to a utility or other private 3rd party, then the utility/private 3rd party concerned takes over the responsibility for completion of all the necessary works/reinstatement, or by agreement (written consent) repays the costs of the works to the council.

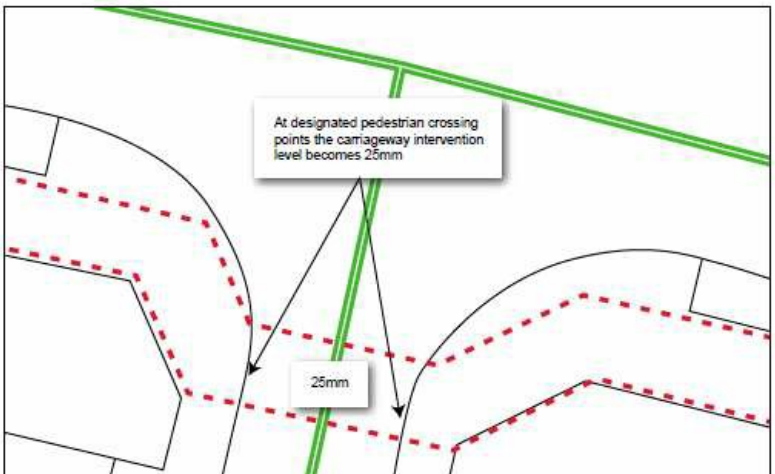
Section 7 - Utility works

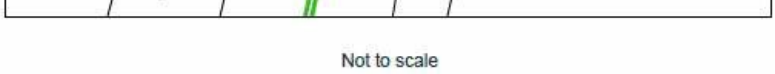
The management of utility works sits outside this code but there are linked with safety inspections as identified in Section 6.

The council works with all the utilities, in terms of both advance programming and day to day programming of works, to effectively co-ordinate highway works, minimising disruption and maximising the cost effectiveness of works, thus helping to avoid damage to the long term structure of the highway.

Appendix A – Pedestrian crossing points/desired line







Not to scale

Appendix B – Highway audits

Highway audits are checked on each safety inspection. A copy of the highway audit for sections of the highway network can be obtained on request.

↑ Back to top

Blackpool Council

Municipal Buildings
Corporation Street
Blackpool
FY1 1NF

Information and help

Accessibility
Contact us
Privacy and cookies
Terms and conditions
Blackpool Council companies

Find my nearest

Enter your postcode to find your nearest schools, council services and more

Enter postcode search

Stay upto date

Sign up to our regular newsletters

Follow us

handle bar template