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Blackpool Culture Hub

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Introduction

Blackpool Council's cultural services is proposing the creation of a culture hub in the Claremont ward, with Blackpool Central Library and Grundy Art Gallery at the heart of the culture-led regeneration.

Two public information events will be taking place at Blackpool Central Library on **Thursday 8 February 2024**, with presentations at **3.00pm and 6.00pm**. Following the events, the proposals will be submitted to Blackpool Council's planning department for consideration.

Blackpool Council has commissioned Ellis Williams Architects to develop concept designs and seek planning approval for the proposed changes. These changes include an extensive refurbishment to Central Library and a brand new extension for The Grundy Art Gallery.

We welcome you to this public engagement website which provides an overview of the proposed development which we seek your views on.

The proposed scheme is estimated to cost £9.8 million. Funding is in place for the initial development plans from UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Blackpool Council. Once the full scheme is drawn up and planning permission is approved, Blackpool Council will be able to apply to various funding streams to enable the works to be carried out.

The scheme fully aligns with the emerging '[Be Who You Want To Be](#)' action plan for Claremont, and a desire to improve and enhance existing cultural facilities in the area.

The proposals

At this stage, the design team is very much working towards achieving a finalised design and as such we expect the proposed development to continuously evolve between now and the submission of the planning application. We will take account of all comments received during the consultation process which will help inform the final design of the scheme.

The project will create reimagined and additional space to provide a range of cultural activities, events and exhibitions. It will make the building complex more accessible and comfortable for different people's needs when visiting and people will be able to move between the library and the gallery through an internal connecting link.

Overall the refurbishment of both buildings and a major new extension to the Grundy aim to be a major catalyst in transforming Queen Street into a vibrant and thriving part of Blackpool's town centre.

The key changes for Central Library include:

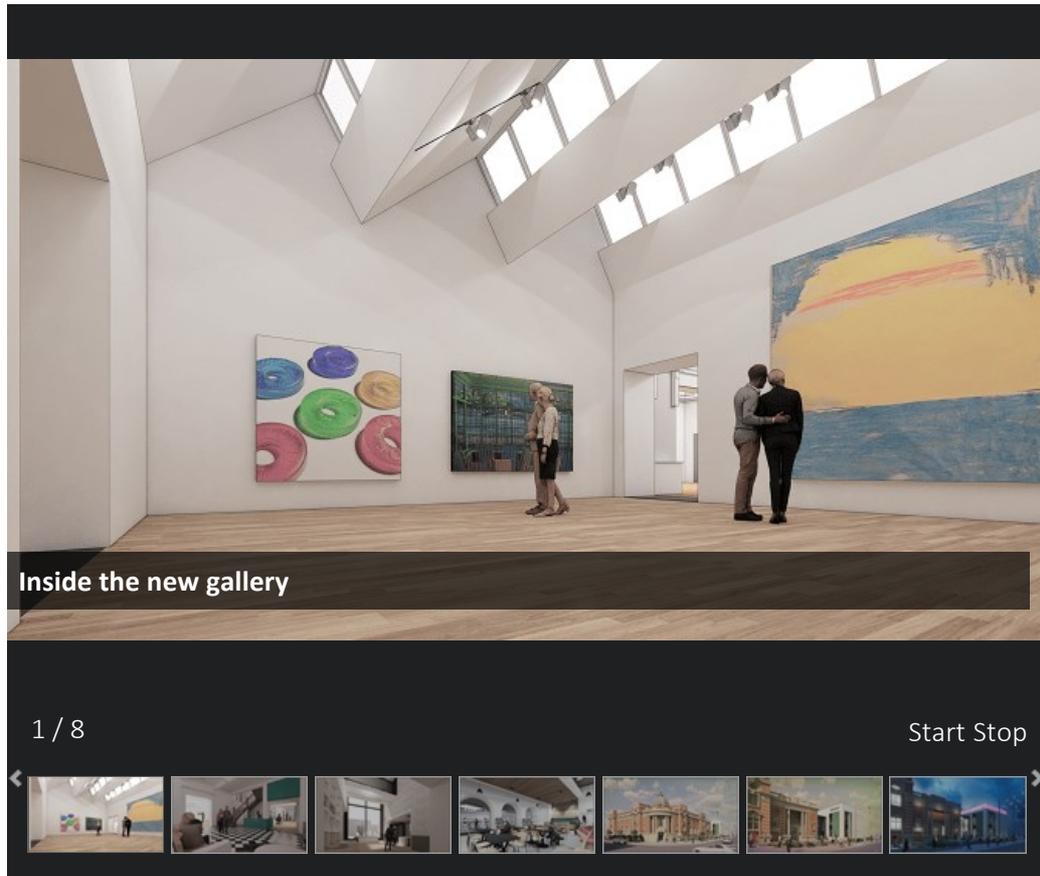
- A redesigned Showtown History Centre on the upper floor where the public can access the varied heritage collections
- A large flexible multi-use space downstairs for public talks, workshops, events, and seminars, with kitchen and changing room

facilities

- The option of a café, permanent or pop-up, is also being considered

The key changes for the Grundy Art Gallery include:

- The provision of a major new gallery space to facilitate a wider range of exhibitions of national and international status
- New spaces for school and community groups to take part in workshops
- An improved shop offer
- Toilet/cloakroom facilities



Key benefits

It is estimated the project would bring 59,000 additional visitors to the site per year by increasing and diversifying the engagement in culture, learning, creativity and heritage of Blackpool residents and raising the contemporary cultural profile of Blackpool as a destination.

The proposals will also build on the 'Be Who You Want To Be' initiative along with other up-and-coming cultural schemes to really enhance and improve what Blackpool already has to offer. Furthermore, the improvements to the buildings should be seen as a potential catalyst for wider improvements to the surrounding area but also building on the wider improvements to the town centre.

Importantly, the proposed extension and works within the building will provide the library and The Grundy with the appropriate spaces and facilities to deliver an excellent cultural offer of activities, exhibitions and events for the residents of Blackpool and visitors from across the North West of England and beyond. It will support the growing recognition of the Grundy as a renowned art destination in the UK.

Planning application

A planning application is anticipated to be submitted to Blackpool Council's local planning authority at the end of February 2024. As such, we welcome feedback from the local community on the initial proposals for the site prior to submission of the planning application.

The key project team comprises Ellis Williams Architects who have developed the concept designs, along with Curtins (Structural Engineering), RPS (Services Engineering), AEC (Acoustic Consultants), Hydrock (Fire Engineering) and Lambert Smith Hampton (Planning Consultants).

As part of our planning application, we intend to submit the following supporting reports which will be viewable on the council's planning portal once submitted:

- Existing and proposed planning drawings
- Site location plan
- Planning letter
- Design and access statement
- Site investigations report
- Heritage statement
- Noise impact assessment
- Transport statement
- Drainage strategy

Have your say

Thank you for taking the time to consider the plans to deliver major improvements to the buildings that make up Blackpool Central Library and the Grundy Art Gallery.

The project team value the views of the public and therefore we invite you to provide your comments regarding the scheme prior to submission of the planning application.

All comments will be considered individually and confidentially and will assist the project team in taking the scheme forward.

Come along to the Grundy on Thursday 8 February 2024 to have your say on the proposals.

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