

GORDON MARSDEN

Member of Parliament for Blackpool South



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Constituency Office: 304 Highfield Road, Blackpool FY4 3JX

Dear Gary

I am responding to the Planning Application made by Blackpool Music Academy that comes before the Committee on Tuesday September 18th.

I have been familiar with the work of the Blackpool Music School for a number of years and particularly since they established their premises in my constituency at Waterloo Road in 2009.

I have visited their premises there on a number of occasions since then, for Music School Open Days, charity events and other meetings. I am very aware of the significant contribution to the community across Blackpool that the School has made since then in operating to offer music training, including instruments, to a wide range of people from the town of all ages. I am informed that the School operates on a membership basis with free tuition, with use of schools facilities for instruments practice.

The value of that work has been emphasised by the number of responses supporting the School's planning application from local people, including teachers and the third sector, as well as individuals, all giving testimonials to the School and its work .

Specifically in terms of younger people, at a time when facilities and funding from Government for music education has been relatively limited, the Blackpool Music School has been a crucial resource to our young people. It has also been of value in supporting a number of much older people, who find the sessions they offer there of real value to supporting their mental health and combatting isolation.

The School's extension application includes a proposal for dropped kerb parking for one disabled specific access car, plus three other parking spaces to the front of its premises. The School have said that this application which they are now making will enable them to provide total access for wheelchair bound students.

I can say from my own observations and conversations involving disabled users of the premises when I have visited the School on various occasions that this should be of considerable value in enhancing the School's services to local users and to people with disabilities across Blackpool.

I have taken note of the officer observations on the application in relation to its impact on near neighbours to the School. But the officer report also acknowledges the School's existing benefits to the wider community across Blackpool and admits that the decision is a finely balanced one for members of the Committee.

I hope that recognition of the benefits of increased access for Blackpool residents with disabilities will be taken into account in that decision, given the responsibility of all local authorities under legislation to promote disabled access for their residents.

In respect of observations as regards the impact of the application on the immediate geographic space and road layout adjacent to the Music School, including Kirkstall Avenue, I am as I have indicated well acquainted with it. In my opinion I doubt that the proposal will have a major negative impact on the streetscape - indeed it might, given the addition of extra parking spaces, be of benefit to local residents parking there.

I hope the Committee will be able to consider the points made here as they make their decision (including the efforts the Music School have made to address previous points) on the Music School's application.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Marsden', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

GORDON MARSDEN MP