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SECTION 1

Background

The Team

In December 2002 a team led by Building Design Partnership (BDP) was appointed by Arun District Council to prepare a Masterplan with a twenty-year vision for Bognor Regis town centre. The Masterplan team consisted of BDP (Masterplanners), Donaldsons (property advisors) and MVA (transport specialists). This Masterplan has been developed in parallel to the work that Vail Williams, (Property Research Consultancy) has been undertaking for SEEDA assessing office demand in the West Sussex coast.

Scope of the Masterplan

The Masterplan provides a vision for the long-term development of Bognor Regis town centre, and is based on practical and achievable concepts that will provide a bright future and new role for the town.

A key part of the Masterplan is the Action and Implementation Plan, which provides a framework to deliver a series of individual costed projects, which will assist in delivering an urban renaissance in Bognor Regis.

Status of the Masterplan

To date, a lot of work has been undertaken to develop a strategy to reinvent Bognor Regis as a distinct and vibrant place to live, work and visit. Much of this work has been undertaken by Arun District Council, West Sussex County Council, Bognor Regis Town Council, SEEDA and the Bognor Regis Vision Group. This on going commitment to the town has resulted in the Bognor Regis Town Centre Study (2000) – which has since been adopted as a consultation draft, the publication of the Public Realm Strategy, and the commissioning of public realm improvements to the High Street.

As a result of these studies, Arun District Council will be preparing development briefs for two key sites - the Regis Centre development site and Hothampton Car Park, while the Vision Group has produced their own vision for the town centre. In preparing the Masterplan, the team have digested and expanded on much of the work that has been undertaken in Bognor Regis and translated this into a vision for the long term, successful and sustainable development of the town centre.

It has been a principal objective from the outset, to develop a coherent vision for Bognor Regis, which sits comfortably within the wider Area Investment Framework, the local plan and other strategies for the town. The Arun District Local Plan, which was adopted on 17 April 2003, sets out the Council's

intention to prepare and adopt supplementary planning guidance for the regeneration of the sites in Bognor Regis town centre subject to this Masterplan. (Local Plan policy SITE 2). It also states that Development Briefs will be the medium for coordinating and achieving the developments envisaged within the Masterplan. It is intended that Arun District Council will adopt this Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The Masterplan may take 20-25 years to implement, depending on development interest and market trends. Therefore it is important that the Masterplan is flexible to allow individual quarters to be developed in a phased way, to allow some early wins, without compromising the longer-term vision for the town.

The Vision – A new role for the 21st Century

The vision for Bognor Regis is to provide a new role for the town in the 21st Century. This new role will build upon its assets and create a series of new attractions for residents and visitors alike. At the heart of the vision will be a new vital and viable town centre with a richness of urban form and a quality of architecture that will reposition Bognor Regis as a first class coastal destination.

There is no 'big bang' approach to turn the fortunes of the town around. Instead the vision will be delivered through a collection of integrated quarters that will reinvent Bognor Regis as a quality place to live, a town that offers a unique, quality shopping experience, and a relaxing and exciting place to spend an evening or weekend. The new experience for the town centre user will be delivered through a variety of new landmark buildings with exciting uses and quality public spaces that will make a new destination in a spectacular setting for residents, businesses and visitors to Bognor Regis.

The Masterplan proposes a diverse mix of uses that shall make Bognor Regis an exciting destination. The jewel in the crown will be the development of the Regis Centre site into a family leisure attraction to create a landmark building that addresses the seafront and animates a first class public space. To increase vitality and support new facilities the demographic composition of Bognor Regis has to be diversified, this can be

achieved through the development of residential dwellings in and around the town centre. The style and scale of residential developments should complement the existing townscape. Bognor Regis town centre will become a place that has a range of roles and character throughout the day, to ensure that there is something for everyone.

Bognor Regis should become more vibrant due to the increased number of people living in the town and the reduction in leakage to competing centres, a result of the new retail offer that Bognor Regis will have. The improved quality of the town centre will increase civic pride and encourage residents to spend an evening in the town centre having dinner in the Old Town or perhaps meeting friends in the Café Quarter. The diverse evening economy should meet the aspirations of most residents resulting in a balanced and mixed-use character set within a lively, safe and environmentally attractive town centre.

The attraction for visitors will be the opportunity to spend a day or weekend in a quality seaside town that has an excellent shopping environment and a good selection of cafes, bars and restaurants. A town that is legible and is easy to move around, where there are attractions which offer enclosure and shelter on not so sunny days. Bognor Regis will offer the appeal of larger centres in terms of quality of experience, however it will also offer visitors the intimacy that can only be found in smaller towns. More importantly there are parts of the town that will feel individual and special, such as the landmark leisure

development on the seafront, where visitors can relax, promenade, visit the theatre or an exhibition before having dinner overlooking the sea. Bognor Regis will be welcoming to those visiting the town by public transport or car.

The town will exhibit a quality public realm that achieves a sustainable balance between pedestrian and vehicular activity connects each of the quarters. A hierarchy of new streets and public spaces will be created on natural desire lines within the town centre to provide areas for people to meet and relax, creating a sense of place and enhancing town centre vibrancy.

Each quarter will have a different character, ranging from the cosmopolitan space outside the railway station that may be animated by those eating and drinking alfresco, the family orientated square adjacent to the seafront or the more tranquil, green space in the heart of the community at Hothamton.

The masterplan concept



The architecture will be varied and modern, creating new landmark buildings and providing enclosure and enlivened spaces. There will be a commitment to design briefs for each individual element of the Masterplan, to ensure variety and the highest design quality. The choice of materials will establish new design standards in the wider area.

The town centre vision will create a quality environment of integrated, people friendly streets and open spaces for people to live, rest and enjoy and to provide a new piece of townscape responding to the 21st century. The Masterplan offers a long term vision and strategy to deliver a high quality mixed-use town centre that offers a series of attractions that should provide a prosperous and sustainable future for Bognor Regis.

These new quarters will change the social demographics within Bognor Regis. Urban living and the establishment of quality leisure destinations within the town centre will attract upwardly mobile, young professionals who are attracted to this lifestyle. This will help sustain the new facilities by increasing spend within the centre of Bognor Regis. It is essential that new developments within the town centre be socially inclusive to ensure that they benefit the existing and new community as well as visitors to Bognor Regis.



Eight new quarters have been identified in the Masterplan. However there are other sites such as the old Esplanade theatre site, that are not identified in the Masterplan as at present it is difficult to make these sites viable. However once the image, attractions and demographics of Bognor Regis have been improved sites such as the Esplanade theatre site will provide an exciting opportunity.

Masterplan Principles

The Masterplan is a robust document that is continually evolving. It provides the boundaries for development and reduces uncertainties for the wider community and developers regarding development of the town. The Masterplan details the twenty year vision for Bognor Regis town centre, and has identified quarters that can be developed as resources, market trends and opportunities allow individual sites to be brought forward for development.

The Masterplan should be continually reviewed to ensure that the vision for the town is meeting the aspirations of the wider community over time.

The town centre has a number of key challenges to be addressed if it is to retain its development in a way that creates a stronger and more versatile location. From work that has been previously undertaken a number of issues have been identified that the Masterplan must address:

- Lack of successful commercially driven development
- Its coastal location and limited population catchment
- The poor perception of the town's potential in the eyes of incoming investors and occupiers
- The perceived advantages of adjacent towns
- An unattractive and restrictive town centre layout
- The growth of car usage, which has led to expenditure leakage to other centres.

What is required to help overcome these issues is a clear and positive vision for Bognor Regis in the short (0 –3 years), medium (3-8 years) and longer term (8+ years), and the steps that have to be taken to achieve this vision. It is essential that the Masterplan should:

- Be positive and aspirational
- Make a real difference, in terms of image and quality
- Be credible
- Be attractive to local people, visitors, business and investors.
- Be deliverable
- Be positively integrated

Masterplan Principles

The Masterplan has been developed on the following principles:

1. *Creating a series of integrated character areas themed around particular activities.*

The opportunity exists in the town centre to create a series of linked character areas, which will have the combined effect of strengthening civic pride among residents, businesses and visitors to the area. The quarters are based around the main development opportunities in the town, namely:

- The Regis Centre site for Family Entertainment.
- Hothampton Car Park for extended community and civic functions.

- Fittleet Multi-storey and Safeway car parks for increased retailing.
- Promenade for seafront activities and attractions.
- A café quarter in the conservation area.
- An entertainment area focused around the railway station.
- A new community to the north of the town centre.

Critically, the overall regeneration of the town centre can only be achieved if the quarters are linked physically, functionally and psychologically into the life and fabric of Bognor Regis.

2. Strengthening the physical and visual links between the promenade and town centre.

Water is a fundamental attraction in all cultures and for most people. A key goal for the town is to break down the physical barriers between the railway station, town centre and the seafront to reinforce the seaside character of the area and maximise its major attribute.

3. Encouraging a better shopping experience.

Bognor Regis should seek to retain and gradually improve its retail role providing a quality comparison, convenience, specialist and service function to its existing catchment and visitors to the town. This can be achieved through creating a framework for improvements to the retail environment, expanding the retail floorspace and improving connections between principal retail streets.

- Creating opportunities for additional retail development to absorb anticipated increases in retail capacity and demand over the next 20 years, and improve the quality and range of the retail offer including monitoring the potential for the future development of the Safeway car park to provide a critical mass of retailing in the heart of the town centre.
- Implementing the proposed developments at the Hothampton, Queensway car park site, which will act as a catalyst to the improvement of Queensway by encouraging greater footfall in this part of the town centre.
- Environmental improvements which will create a more pleasant shopping environment, increasing “browse” time and therefore consumer spending. Active town centre management introducing initiatives to manage and promote the town centre.

4. Improving the perceived quality of the townscape and public realm through improvements to key building facades, streets and spaces.

The town needs to achieve a “step change”, in terms of achieving quality through design standards. Higher standards need to be set for streetworks including proposals for paving, furniture, signing and lighting. Through the planning framework, future development briefs need to ensure that new developments improve the townscape.

5. Creating a better balance between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

A fundamental objective must be to incorporate measures to improve circulation and movement in the town, specifically for pedestrians. Key goals include improving signing and access to car parks, providing designated cycle routes into and around the town centre and creating safe environments within the heart of the town and promenade.

6. Providing a quality visitor experience to encourage more visitor activity and secure more investment for the tourism product.

7. Creating a sense of arrival at the town.

Establish distinctive gateways at the boundaries, introducing attractive urban markers and distinctive street furniture to identify quarters.