

**RE - INVIGORATE**

**Bognor Regis Regeneration Group**



**February 2015**

# A Community led Proposal for the Regeneration of Bognor Regis

**Prepared for:** Arun District Council and the local Community;  
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## Introduction

BDP's Planning Policy Guidance document of November 2004 outlines the area known locally as the Regis Centre site as the "jewel in the crown" of the town designating the site as Bognor's "leisure quarter", whilst recognising its lack of modern facilities. Given the lack of economic and political commitment to BDP's assessment this group seek to present a viable regenerative model that recognises the socio-economic needs of the site and its surroundings. It should address the macro demographic requirements of the town whilst emphasising a commitment to community involvement and reconciling the seemingly dialectic need for regeneration with a finite financial resource. Whilst there are no specific functional or space requirements implicit in this document it is anticipated that an overview resolution will be sought that recognises the impact a successful intervention might make in terms of social regeneration for the area.

BDP's assessment that the site's formative role as a leisure quarter is acknowledged as well as its potential impact as a driver to facilitate social well-being for occupants, users and visitors.

- i. The project aims to provide the maximum regenerative impact for available funds;
  - ii. It seeks to do this whilst considering the wider objectives of the community;
  - iii. It will recognise the towns desire for an appropriately scaled development in terms of footprint, area, type and environmental impact;
  - iv. It will be considered in view of local infrastructure needs and aspirations;
  - v. It will seek to utilise stakeholder resources at every opportunity to both minimise budgetary obligations and maximise community involvement. It is anticipated this will increase ownership by the community and instill pride in its achievements;
  - vi. The design will be conscious of the ever-changing dynamic of the area and will attempt to embed future secure flexibility at its heart;
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## Statement about Context

The site lies to the south of the main retail arteries of London Road and the High Street in the heart of the Sussex seaside town of Bognor Regis. It has a southern boundary with the promenade and is separated from the beach by a lightly trafficked single lane road. Its western proximity narrows to a point where it meets a six storey residential building and has at its north eastern edge the late Victorian town hall. The site is currently occupied by a run-down entertainments complex, the Regis Centre, an inaccessible landscaped area to the west and car parking to the east. There is the significant architectural feature of the arcade, a late Georgian pedestrian thoroughfare which connects the site back to the shopping quarter. Other noteworthy features include a frontage of terraced Victorian premises along the sites northern boundary.





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## Objective

- To put forward a grassroots community led vision for the seafront regeneration of Bognor Regis as part of the invitation to submit ideas to Arun District Council;
- To engage the local community and represent the ideas of those residents that chose to participate;
- To help local people to have a voice and generate interest in local issues;
- To build on the significant assets of Bognor Regis that contributes towards an excellent quality of life.

## Goals

### Community:

- To increase local civic pride and create a regeneration proposal that complements local community aspirations;
- To engage a good cross-section of residents from the town to participate;
- For local residents to take action by collaborating and managing their own project.

### Proposal:

- To increase local civic pride and create a regeneration proposal that complements local community aspirations;
  - To welcome visitors from outside Bognor Regis and increase footfall by offering a unique, exciting and accessible proposal in keeping with a seaside town and the seafront area;
  - To create a catalyst for attracting investment to the town and promote local and regional enterprise opportunities;
  - To benefit from the massive visitor economy of nearby locations such as Brighton, Eastbourne, the South Downs National Park and Goodwood.
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## Outcomes

- The Group determines to represent the aspirations of grass roots community interest through its desire to engage, listen and support those who feel passionately about the future development of their home town;
- Almost 1000 residents participated in our consultation and gave their opinions which informed our proposal; We aim to offer a scheme that gives voice to the results of this consultation;
- Increased social capital for group members and local community who were proactive in their involvement and participation
- The group aims to propose a commercially viable proposal that can be taken up and implemented to fulfillment via appropriate agency involvement.

## Project Outline

In response to the invitation to submit ideas to Arun District Council, a small group of five residents came together with the objective of representing local residents views on the regeneration of the proposed Regis & Hothampton sites.

For a four week period flyers were distributed in various locations to raise awareness, using local news coverage participants set up an ideas database on social media and worked with a local small business to have a drop in box for submissions of thoughts, plans and written proposals. To keep to the very limited timeline given, all ideas had to be gathered quickly to move on to the next stage. The group invited those who submitted ideas to join them in combining them into an official proposal. This led to the group becoming a more substantial fifteen volunteers of local residents from diverse backgrounds, all of whom have since met weekly to put a viable proposal forward. As a group we have distributed close to 4000 flyers, had over 200 ideas submitted, and distributed a survey which has almost 1000 responses through online and face-to-face contact. Independent residents have also taken surveys to distribute to their neighbours and friends to return to us; giving a larger network response.

**The survey questions were informed by the ideas gathered and the final proposal has been informed by the results of the survey based on those ideas. The survey results are available as part of this document. We as a group have sought to represent those ideas in a viable way.**

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## Content

### Proposal

We are seeking to demolish the Alexander Theatre on the Regis centre site, a facility many people in Bognor Regis see as a failing viable commercial entity and no longer responding to the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century seaside community. This would be replaced with an integrated leisure offer befitting the nature, size and scope of this hugely important seafront location. The proposal seeks to comply with the survey results in offering many of the component parts, residents and visitors expressed a desire for.

These include the following:

- An outdoor water pool/lido with Splash area;
- An Indoor Soft play area with seating;
- Retail spaces;
- Café/Bars/Restaurants;
- A climbing wall;
- A Zip wire;
- Beach huts;
- An integrated beach front which allows for access to the sand;
- An outdoor stage/ amphitheatre;
- Seafront concessions;
- A Roller Rink/Multi-purpose indoor surface;
- Flexible Multi-Use Indoor Space;
- Gallery/Exhibition Space;

In order to deliver this ambitious scheme the group understands a financially viable offer is necessary; We therefore propose a three step pathway to regeneration of the Regis Centre Site and nearby town:-

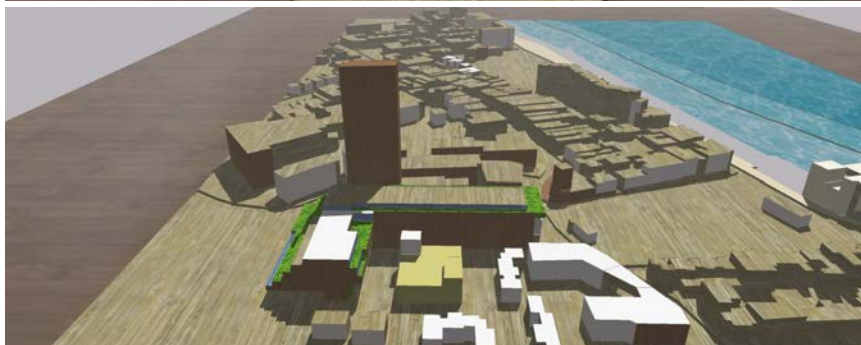
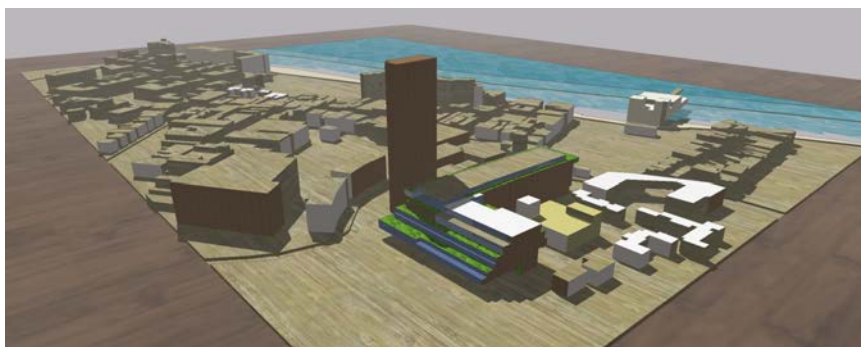
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## Step 1:-

Land to the west of Fitzleet Tower, currently a car park and **Sunken Gardens** would be made available for commercial development; This land is owned by the local authority & could be offered for sale at a current market rate of around £12 million (estimated December 2014). It has substantial potential for development of up to 250 apartments in a town centre location with fantastic views across the bowling green to the sea and would offer a property development agency a healthy return under current market conditions. The existing parking would be retained with accommodation starting at First Floor Level. Council tax rates for a development of this scale could be in the region of £479,750.00 pa (based on £1919.01@250 units, Band E, Bognor Regis) The land sale funds alone would be ring fenced for the development of the seafront site; We would also press for a potential Section 106 Agreement which would fund an integrated theatre/community facility within the development.



Impressions of potential new Residential Development at Hothampton site

## Step 2:-

With the residential/commercial development of the Sunken Gardens site we would anticipate a regenerative creep allowing The Queensway to benefit from increased commercial opportunity. This tired and wind swept retail area has become synonymous with empty shops and would see increased visitor traffic due to its proximity to the Sunken Gardens. We would expect a renewed interest in retailers in **The Queensway** as a commercially viable location to attract its new residents. Increases in business rates would be an obvious local authority driver;

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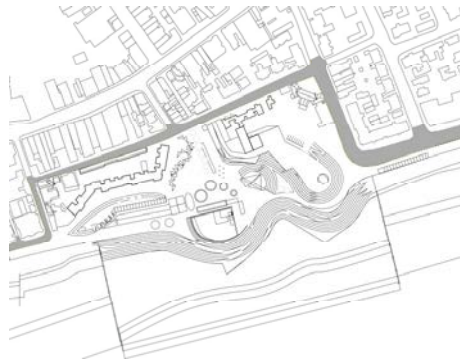


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### Step 3:-

The ring fenced funds would see a five phase development of the seafront as follows:-

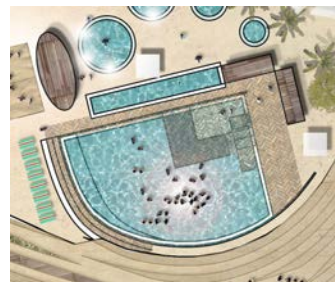
1. The diversion of the **Esplanade Rd** between Clarence Road and Lennox Street with double sided parking installed along road edges between Gloucester Road and Clarence Road with up to 360 spaces in total;



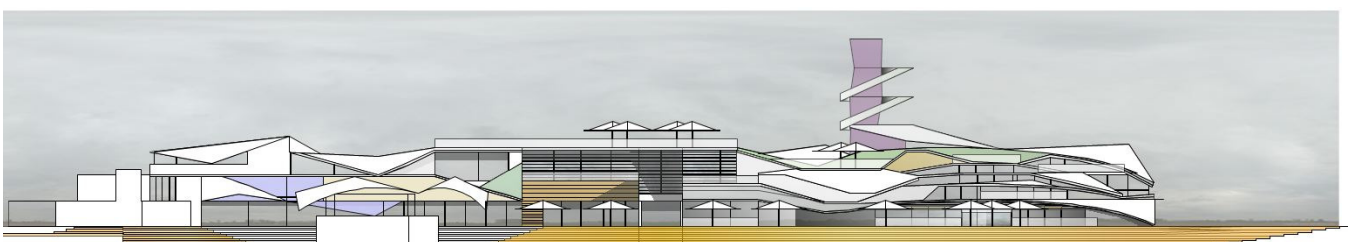
2. The construction of a new **promenade** edge between Clarence Road and Lennox Street, taking the form of a series of waved and banked terraces to the sand level, allowing for access to the sand level at low tide and with sufficient sea defence capability at high tides. Such a scheme has been successfully implemented at Cleveley's in 2014;



3. The construction of a **seawater lido** similar in size and scope to that at Bude, Cornwall, providing safe, available paddling and swimming with associated shower, changing facilities, and landscaping in context with the above;



4. The construction of an integrated **multi-use leisure** and retail building, component parts of which would be made available for operational lease including retail, cafes, bars, observation tower, restaurants, climbing wall, roller rink, indoor soft play area, multi-purpose space, exhibition/gallery space etc. In line with the aspirations expressed in our recent survey;



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5. An extensive landscaping scheme which would include an outdoor amphitheatre for events and performances as well as other external features such as fountains, splash park area, planting appropriate to a seaside context, thoughtfully designed concession stands and pods, showers for bathers, bike racks and parking, beach huts for purchase and public artwork in line with the town's cultural narrative.



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## Benefits for Bognor Regis

We believe that our regeneration vision for Bognor Regis has the ability to cater to the needs of the Community and be a stand-out destination for day visitors and holiday-makers. The development would offer a genuine regenerative package, bringing investment opportunities to multi-national retailers and caterers alongside concessionary opportunities for local enterprise including the operation of the lido, the seafront zip-wire, and volleyball courts with café, the amphitheatre, the climbing wall and soft play area, as well as micro-retailers along the proposed Belmont St frontage. This mix of utilising the natural summer resources of sun and beach together with an adult indoor café/bar culture would provide a year round economic driver for the area, an appealing visitor attraction and local pride currently lacking in parts of the town.

Building on local-based business success such as Butlins and the healthy independent summer economy of the town, we would like to offer a seafront design that is attractive whilst complementing the surrounding environment. With usable functions for local residents and visitors all year round; we believe this would support:

- Bognor Regis to be a desirable day-trip, weekend break or second holiday destination;
- Promote Bognor Regis as a seaside town that complements and protects a seafront leisure space by avoiding an increasingly jaded tourism product of over urbanisation;
- Retain a balance between raising the quality without losing the seafront appeal that characterises Bognor Regis;
- Bring real and long-term employment opportunities through new branded and small business start-up enterprises;
- Support Community need and celebrate Community feeling;
- Supports the regeneration of the Pier as part of an iconic Sussex seafront.

*“Iconic developments show imagination and demonstrate an ability to adapt to changes in fortune and fashions; create a memorable destination and can be a catalyst for future regeneration”*

We have been led by community input and have included the elements that have been requested by those who participated. However, we recognise as a group that certain constraints need to be addressed; these include but may not be limited to existing lease arrangements such as those with Whitbreads plc. To placate existing stakeholders the group recognises the inclusion of a quality hotel as part of a regeneration package may be a necessary concession to the development aspirations of the community.

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## Funding

Whilst the group seek to represent the community aspiration for the Regis Centre Site it does this with a balanced approach to realistic financial viability. Our three step regenerative approach believes a cash fund of approximately £14 million can be made available by ring fencing profit from the land sale of the Hothamton site for residential development. Alongside this a £1.2 million revenue stream can be channelled into the scheme from profit secured from new Beach Hut sales on and to the east of the site along the existing promenade.

Whilst the project would not seek to be dependent on additional funding the scope of the project would suggest further top up funding could be made available as with other prominent seafront developments from agencies such as Arts Council and Coastal Communities of which a £29 million fund is available for across the board projects to 2016 (see for example Margate's recent successful bid for £1.8 million for its Dreamland development).

## Initial Costings Appraisal

Estimates based on current research and precedents available at time of research

Infrastructure and road changes -	£0.5 million;
Coastal Promenade changes and lido construction -	£3 million;
External Landscaping and facilities -	£5.2 million;
Shell and Core Build cost ready for leaseholder fit -	£8.7 million;
Total	£17.4 million

All costings and funding figures are based on calculated appraisals carried out by the group.

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## Conclusion

It is felt the integrity of the group to deliver an aspirational vision for the site and town led by community input from the outset has been maintained throughout the process. Our Investigation has reached a number of conclusions regarding the development of the Regis Centre Site. Namely, we believe the preservation of the site made implicit in the BDP 2004 Masterplan, to continue as the leisure hub for the town should be maintained.

Secondly, that residential development to fund the scheme can be initiated on other sites so long as funding is ring fenced for future community aspiration on the Regis Centre Site.

Thirdly, a viable three fold path to genuine regeneration can be initiated to provide local economic prosperity, opportunities for large and small scale commercial enterprises, Increased business and council tax returns for local authority, community focus and enhancement of the town's last remaining seafront location and a sustainable and unique day or holiday destination to mainland UK's sunniest town well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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Site Plan

# Ground Floor Plan





First Floor Plan



- Restaurant
- Cafe/Bars/Retail
- Indoor Soft Play/with Outdoor Climbing Wall
- Gallery/Exhibition
- Multi-purpose Hall
- Concessions

Second Floor Plan



- Restaurant
- Cafe/Bar/Retail
- Indoor Soft Play/with Outdoor Climbing Wall
- Gallery/Exhibition
- Multi-purpose Hall
- Concessions



# Third Floor Plan



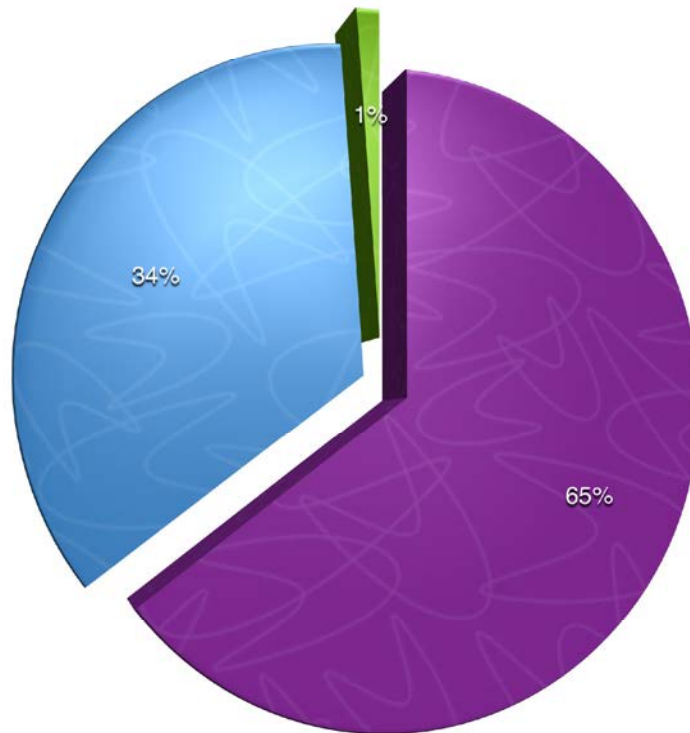
- Restaurant
- Cafe/Bars/Retail
- Indoor Soft Play/with Outdoor Climbing Wall
- Gallery/Exhibition
- Multi-purpose Hall
- Concessions



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## Type of regeneration:

● Major Regeneration      ● Low-level Regeneration      ● No Regeneration



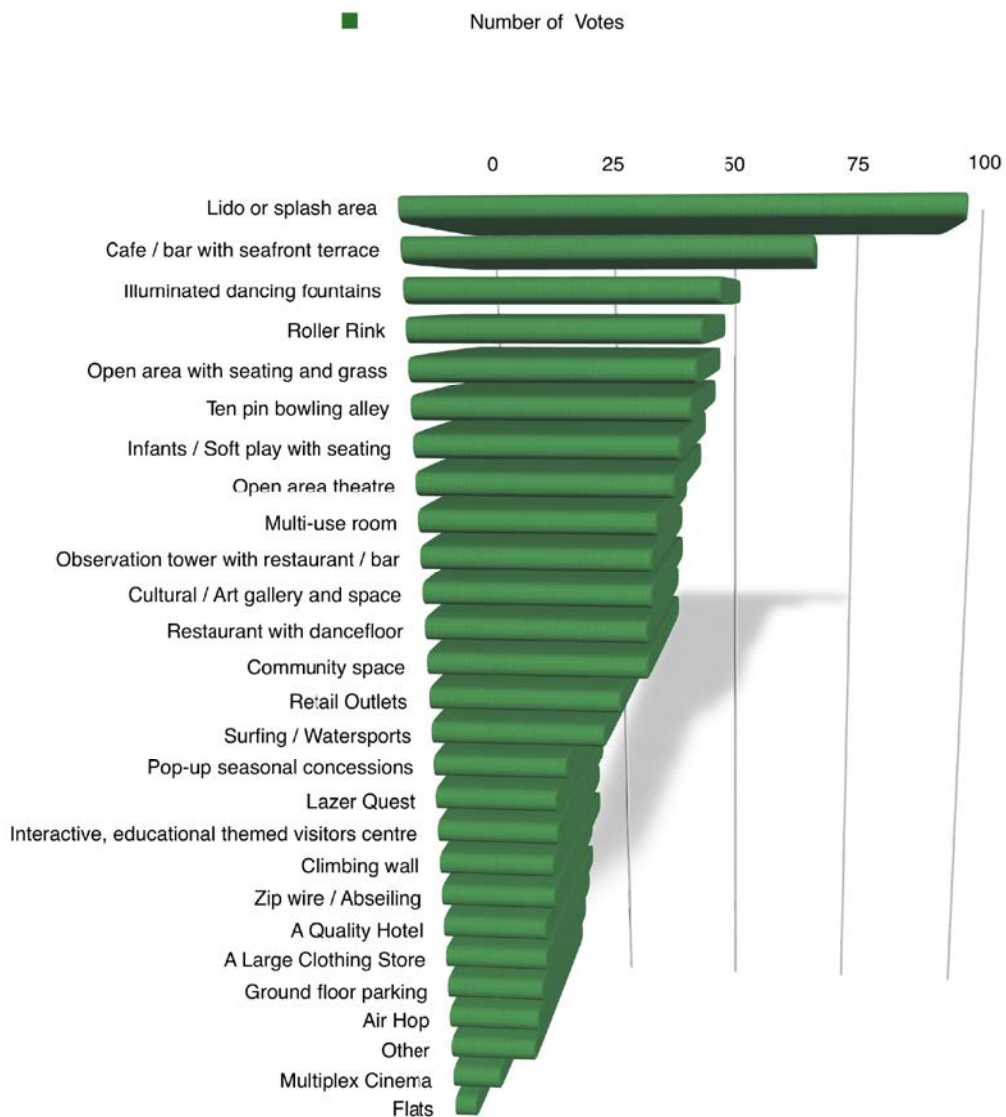
## Age groups of participants:

● Under 18 = 12% ● 19-24 = 7% ● 25-34 = 16% ● 35-44 = 16% ● 45-54 = 16% ● 55-64 = 14% ● 65+ = 20% ● Rather not say = 1%



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# Ideas for the Regis site:



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