

# REGIS QUARTER

Vision and briefing document

**1** Introduction

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**2** Overall vision

---

**3** Site context

---

**4** Planning context

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**5** Deliverables

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Annex A

## 1. Introduction

This brief is designed to articulate the vision and scope for the regeneration and re-development of the Regis Centre car park site and adjoining areas and buildings, located on the Esplanade, Bognor Regis. It is intended this will help brief and recruit a professional consultancy design team employed to envisage and deliver a viable feasibility study and business plan for this underutilised sea front area, working in conjunction, initially with the Arun District Council (ADC) regeneration team Coast to Capital and various stakeholders.

ADC is already investing circa £16m in the Regis Centre itself, to refurbish and extend it under the Government's Levelling Up Fund. In addition, terms have been agreed for a lease of the eastern part of the site to Whitbread/Premier Inn to construct a 116-bedroom hotel with associated restaurant facility. The Council now wishes to develop proposals and a business case for the re-development of the remaining part of the site which covers the car park area, former Brewers Fayre pub (adjoining the Regis Centre), adjacent public toilets and ancillary hard and soft landscaped areas, paths and roads. The development proposals will link with and compliment the new Regis Centre/Alexandra Theatre, the already completed new Place Saint Maur public realm/piazza, the to be redeveloped (residential/hospitality/retail) Bognor Arcade – a late Victorian locally listed heritage asset which initial Brownfield Land Release Funding has been secured for, and the Town Hall. The Town Hall is Grade 2 listed (1920s Voysey designed) and cannot be demolished but may be re-purposed in-part/whole for civic, council or commercial uses. This will be subject to further review but any masterplan should respect this heritage asset and its setting and potential integration. It is anticipated that by linking these various elements with a well-planned and researched mix of new and existing/repurposed building uses/occupiers, public and private realm, hard and soft landscaping, that a cohesive, viable new urban area will better connect to the town centre and seafront.



## 2. Overall vision

The overall vision for the site is to create a vibrant and significant development, comprising of elegant seaside architecture with uses and occupiers that contribute to and benefit the visitor and local economies. This will provide a high quality destination and flexible mix of uses likely to include commercial, leisure/tourism, hospitality/F&B/additional hotel, at ground and first/upper floor levels. Above will likely be multi-level residential seafront living with terracing and balconies (and any necessary provision of policy compliant affordable housing either on or off site). The development will be activated ideally on all sides and particularly across the Esplanade frontage and linking with Place Saint Maur. Possibly at higher upper levels with an observation platform and sky bar/restaurant. Ideally public and private car parking will be re-provided below a podium (ideally undercroft and naturally ventilated) across the site, possibly over two or more levels, albeit there is latent capacity in other existing town centre public car parks.

The proximity of the site to the beach and seafront affords the opportunity to create an architecturally significant landmark design. The Council is particularly keen to see low carbon, sustainable design and architecture that responds to the town's heritage, whether that be a contemporary take on either Regency or Art Deco elegance or similar. Architecture must be appropriate and responsive to the existing esplanade character, together with that of the listed Town Hall, late Victorian Arcade and soon to be redeveloped Regis Centre/Alexandra Theatre – which to a certain extent does already set architectural tone with its proposed new seaside Art Deco inspired elevations and elegance (see image on right).

The opportunity exists for a fully activated, interlinking, permeable and complimentary mix of buildings and realms that will seamlessly link with the existing built assets, Esplanade  
[Regis Centre - Vision and briefing document](#)

and beachside setting – providing activity and a destination for visitors and residents and supporting existing town centre businesses all year round, boosting prosperity, economy, wellbeing and the prominence of Bognor Regis.

The Bognor Regis Post article at Annex A gives an overview of the styles and development of architecture within the town.



**Regis Centre/Alexandra Theatre Proposed Elevations**

The mix of residential (likely private, rented, holiday, serviced, hotel) and commercial will be optimised based upon an initial commercial use and residential demand study and the trade-off of residential to commercial will flow from this. The Council has no fixed views on the optimal mix, and this must be driven by viability, although active uses must be provided at ground/first floor level on the two critical North and South aspects and ideally on all frontages with ideally residential above. This residential will likely be required to support viability of the overall provision of the commercial elements, development may be of low to medium rise (7 to 12 storeys).

However, an overall phased design strategy should be incorporated which will help mitigate risk. Additionally, this strategy will help implement and articulate a reasoned and logical build-up of the elements of the scheme when presenting initial ideas to council members, stakeholders and the community-at-large. This being driven by a view by some over the need for residential as part of the scheme (despite this likely being the main driver for facilitating financial and commercial viability and the wider economic benefits this would bring to the town centre by resident footfall -this will be articulated via a linked economic study).

Therefore, the key components (and modelling of) making up the overall development will need to be detailed from an interchangeable base case to an overall fully formed proposal in order to financially model and illustrate the various levels of (un) viability through to overall viability dependent on these phased elements being factored in via interchangeable design. As part of this feasibility work regard will also need to be taken of a similar phased design build up potentially over the former Brewers Fayre building/site.

Consequently, interchangeable concept designs should flow/consider the following ordering:

- Option 1: Brewers Fayre refurbishment/remodeled (with building outlook/access wrapped around to Place Saint Maur), reinstating Royal Hall (performance / hospitality / leisure), and integrated with ground/first floor commercial / leisure / hospitality uses over wider Regis car park site (no reinstated car parking).
- Option 1a: As above (Option 1) but with public car parking below podium and same commercial / leisure / hospitality uses above podium on wider Regis car park site.
- Option 1b: As above but with residential above commercial / leisure / hospitality on car park site and set on podium above residential/public car parking below podium.
- Option 2: Demolish and redevelop Brewers Fayre with commercial / leisure / hospitality on Brewers Fayre site linking with and across wider car park site as above (no reinstated car parking).
- Option 2a: As above (Option 2) and with public car parking below podium and commercial / leisure / hospitality above podium.
- Option 3: Demolish and redevelop Brewers Fayre as above (ground / first floor leisure/hospitality), with residential above that, linked with commercial / leisure / hospitality across wider site and also with residential above, all built over podium / transfer slab with decked public / residential car parking below.

The above options to be refined/narrowed down may then form the basis of more detailed feasibility and financial modelling/viability work. However, instinctively, it is felt that Option 3 may provide the best mix, financial and economic viability. In all instances the existing Belmont Street car park access/egress is likely to form the basis for the new development vehicle access/ egress. The stage door/service yard access/egress and area to the theatre will also need to be retained but this could potentially be capped/enclosed with podium development above but with sufficient height below to accommodate large theatre production vehicles (possibly up to articulated lorry dimensions perhaps with dock leveller or similar and turning/ reversing circle off Belmont Street). Consideration to servicing for commercial/leisure/hospitality units will need to be given and this may be by way of acceptable operational hours with front servicing (from Esplanade shared surface terracing, laybys or similar).



### 3. Site context

The site comprises a level car park bounded by residential and predominantly two-storey properties to the North which are used for a variety of activities including residential and healthcare. The Regis Centre (Alexandra Theatre) and associated community spaces are located on the Western flank of the site, and these are shortly to undergo major construction work to create new spaces, together with a comprehensive refurbishment (now essentially with planning permission ref: BR/142/23/PL). To the South Western corner of the site is located the former Brewers Fayre restaurant. ADC now has possession of this building and owns its freehold, together with that of the whole site outlined, in the site plan below:



### High-level potential masterplan

The former Brewers Fayre restaurant (as detailed in Section 2) forms part of site no.4 and is within the scope of this development project, although it should be noted that it has a structural party wall with the Regis Centre (site no.2) itself. The Brewers Fayre could therefore be demolished making way for more comprehensive development of the site and airspace above, or alternatively repurposed and left in-situ.

To the South of the site is an area of local green space (within site no. 4) which provides a buffer between the Esplanade Road and the car park. This area is of limited value but will be a planning consideration for appropriate mitigation and / or replacement within the development itself. The area slopes down to the South to the Esplanade pavement.

Further South is located the Esplanade sea front road and beach. To the Southwest of the site is located a small public convenience block (within site no.4), which is well used, but within the scope of this development, subject to possible re-provision.

To the East of the site at the junction with Clarence Road will be located the new Premier Inn hotel (site leased to Whitbread by ADC, site no. 1)). The planning application for this hotel has been submitted by Premier Inn and is under consideration by the Council ref. BR/83/23/PL.

To the Northeast of the site is located the Grade II listed town hall (site no.5) which is used today as Council and Town Council offices. The far Eastern aspect of the site is bounded by Clarence Road, which currently has an access route to the car park. This will be stopped-up as part of the Premier Inn development.



## 4. Planning context

The precedent has been set for the comprehensive development of the site and the consultancy design team should examine the expired consent for the site: application ref: BR/156/16/PL (Sir Richard Hotham Development, later named Project Sunrise). This was not a Council-led application. Considerations will be:

- Proximity of development to the Regis Centre, ensuring that the access to the stage door on the Eastern boundary of the theatre building is preserved. This access is required to service the Regis Centre and allow articulated vehicles to offload/collect theatre production equipment etc.
- Vehicular Access being from Belmont Street only.
- Height and massing being sympathetic to the Regis Centre, residential dwellings on Belmont Street and to the Premier Inn, although Whitbread should likely have no legal powers to hinder development. However, they are likely to object to any development that may be seen to compromise their development, although the view from the commissioners of this brief is that the development boundary should be taken as close as possible to all adjoining premises subject to Council planning officer requirements.
- Car park provision. The Council's ideal aim is to retain current levels of public car parking (c.175 spaces). In addition, there shall be sufficient parking for the development itself (see below). This may be subject to wider car park capacity studies.
- Green space. The removal of green space at the South of the site will extend the development footprint and activate/maximise it. Suitable mitigation will be required to

justify this. Reference to the planning policy objectives of local green space should be made, in order to provide suitable solutions to this challenge.

- Overall development height should be maximised and the site does give the opportunity for mid-rise development. However, height will need to be traded against development cost, particularly in context to new fire escape legislation etc.
- Flood risk mitigation & drainage attenuation. Reference should be made to the relevant sections of the Coast to Capital business case for the Phase 1 regeneration of the site, for more information on this constraint.
- Active frontages and use classes. This will be a crucial factor in both planning terms and for the success of the scheme itself. It will be essential to provide active frontages on the Northern and Southern edges of the development.
- Traffic generation and access / egress onto Belmont Street. This current access will be the only access that is likely to be viable to the development and at present this road is a relatively quiet semi residential street.
- A mix of uses will be critical and value maximisation will also be essential, which may mean that policy compliant affordable housing may have to be provided offsite.

A further proposal, the 'Gardens by the Sea' was also previously considered, however was not submitted for planning due to viability. Details can be provided, and it is felt this may be a more appropriate (and potentially linked) leisure use proposal for the London Road lorry/car park adjacent to and enhancing Hotham Park, as this would add (linked) visitor and tourism draw with viability and possibly supported in part by that potentially generated by the Regis Quarter development.

## 5. Deliverables

A number of studies will be procured as part of the design development process. Some of these will be procured before to help inform the master planning and architectural design work:

- a. Commercial and (destination) leisure demand, operator, use and value study, residential (various forms, values, tenures etc.)
- b. Traffic/highways impact model and town wide car parking capacity study.
- c. Initial architectural and urban design (to include 3D visualization/CGI), sufficient to ultimately support an outline planning application and detailing a wider placemaking / urban design realm plan bringing all existing heritage assets and areas together with the new developments proposed to form a cohesive and phased deliverable accommodation & masterplan to help inform financial modelling.
- d. A viability and development financial appraisal based on the above and (preferred) development scenario(s), as detailed in Section 2.
- e. A business case for the overall project for Council approval.

A multidisciplinary team is being procured to deliver this under the engagement of a principal lead consultant, likely to be:

- Architect
- Landscape Architect/Urban Designer

- Structural Engineer
- Highways & Traffic Engineer
- Cost Consultant/QS
- Programme & Phasing Surveyor
- Financial/Modelling/Funding/JV & Development Delivery Partner Analyst/Advisor
- Destination/Leisure/Residential Use, Value, Mix & Agency Advisor
- Utilities/Services/M&E Engineer (high level input) & FRA
- Economist to calculate and articulate wider economic benefits created by the development & it's occupiers, for the town.
- Potentially some high-level town planning input.

## Annex A

Article reproduced from the Bognor Regis Post: **Changing Times – Architects have left their mark on the town.** Posted on 9th September 2017



I once came across a pamphlet produced in 1949 entitled Georgian and Regency Architecture in Bognor. This small pamphlet then set me off on a number of enquiries about the content of the book. When were the Georgian and the Regency periods? Do we have any particular buildings of note from this period? Who were the designers? What has happened since?

First we should look at the periods. The Georgian style of architecture covered a period from 1720 to 1800. This would then encompass the period before Sir Richard Hotham's death and include the many constructions which contributed to his arrival in this small fishing village.

The main sphere of this development contains the likes of Hotham Park House, Spencer Terrace and The Dome currently

used in a very 21st century manner as either flats or as part of the University of Chichester.

He also constructed East Row and Hothampton Place, long since demolished. The Dome House was once described by Mr. A Dale, the author of Fashionable Brighton, as 'the best example of late 18th century work in any seaside town in Sussex'. Some accolade for any building and it is of course still with us today.

The Regency period covered a very short time between 1810 and 1820 and this is defined as the time when King George III was deemed unfit to be king and his son ruled as Prince Regent.

One of the features of this era is the canopied buildings that existed. There are a number still surviving – Valhalla in the High Street; Culver Cottage, Aldwick; and Albert Terrace in the High Street.

At this time, there was the construction of the Webster & Webb building in the High Street and we should not forget, of course, the William Hardwicke in the High Street, constructed in 1815 as a coaching house called the New Inn. It later became The Sussex and in July 2000, it was changed to the William Hardwicke.

One of the early architects in the town was William Kimber Wonham and his brother Daniel Wonham and it is their names that continually appeared with the new constructions in this developing seaside resort. For example, a number of homes in Waterloo Square.

Around 1835, the Bognor Improvement Company employed Sir James Pennethorne to design the layout for the eastern end of the town, i.e. from Waterloo Square to Gloucester Road.

Another name is that of Cecil Stillman who was at one time county architect for West Sussex and was involved in the designs for the Bognor Regis police station, and the then named Westloats School.

Then was the Victorian period. In the year Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 it fell to William Wonham to build the Bognor Club in Sudley Road – still there today. Many of the constructions from this period, including some of the convalescent homes on the seafront, have long since been demolished. However, the Royal Bay Nursing Home in Aldwick Road still remains.

Next we have the 20th century. What notable buildings we do still have from this period are considered to be stylish. We could include the town hall which was designed by Charles Cowles Voysey and built in 1929. Mr. Voysey was born on June 24, 1889, and died at the age of 91 in April 1981. His first major building was the White Rock Pavilion at Hastings, which won a national design competition in 1922.

His design for Worthing Town Hall was included in a list of outstanding buildings in the 1930s. When the current town hall was opened, it was described as 'of high architectural merit – neat but not gaudy. It is slightly classical in style, sedate and impressively free from irrelevant ornamentations'.

Not all buildings constructed in any era are worthy of note. For example, would we include the building in the High Street today occupied by Stonepillow, which clearly shows it was also constructed in 1929, and is next to the 1899 Lock Centre building?

Will the 20th century be remembered for the phenomenon that has become known as The Bungalow, which was in fact an import from India? They were used for a time as a retreat to the country or seaside style of building. In the 1920s, the boom took place

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in the building of these single-storey buildings. Locally, they have been built in estates in Pagham, Rose Green and North Bersted.

Another major era for the town was the 1960s when there were major constructions in the town centre, with the demolition of much older buildings which were replaced by the very modern Fitzleet and Queensway. At the time, it was promoted as one of the great achievements in the town.

Finally, we have the 21st century – which will be interesting as constructions can range from the extremely modernistic to copies of previous eras as can be seen side by side on The Esplanade, where one block of flats was advertised as having an 'Edwardian appearance'. The other construction is very much a glass and chrome construction. The new Shoreline Hotel within Butlin's has been designed and constructed in the 21st century but would it come within the remit of memorable architecture, or should that be the Butlin's Skyline Pavilion?

Looking back to that 1949 pamphlet, exhibition and newspaper reports it is interesting to see how similar their views were on the development of the town compared with today's views.

There were comments written that include such remarks as 'It is hoped that wisdom and an affection for Bognor will guide the hands of those who now control the destiny of Sir Richard Hotham's little watering place'. Therefore, when we look around our town we should look at what we have created and finally wonder how our legacy will be viewed in 50 years.

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