



Submission of Ideas for Bognor Regeneration

One Bognor Society exists to enable ideas and discussion re the future of Bognor Regis, its governance and regeneration. By 'Bognor Regis' is meant the area covered by the urban parishes of Aldwick, Bersted, Bognor Town, Felpham, Middleton and Pagham, with a substantial population of 63,000 residents. [Note – web links are in blue] It functions virtually through two main channels – its [One Bognor Facebook](#) page and a regular online-only newspaper, [The Bognor Regis Herald](#), a mix of original and curated news from many sources. Campaigning is also another feature as well as consultation. The support base for the Society is 844 followers.

The purpose and promise of Regeneration

Analysis of the regeneration needs of Bognor Regis shows a background of decline of share of visitor market, and many other well-understood features which require positive action to address them. This new Arun Consultation for ideas comes in the wake of successive failed regeneration and redevelopment approaches, consultant reports, lack of progress and now the COVID-19 crisis. In lockdown it's important to look forward to see what the landscape could look like post-pandemic. It is really possible to take a very optimistic approach based on the post-Brexit scenario of reduced out-of-country holidays, the benefits of the Bourne investment/new hotel space, and the negative effects of COVID on other venues and also on the leisure industry in many parts of the country. Staycations are predicted to rise sharply in the coming months. **Put simply, Bognor's location, access and climate/topography lend themselves to being a premier location AT THIS TIME for inward regeneration investment as described to me in a OB Vlog discussion which included a successful City investor. [Link to Vlog](#)**

The Proposals

The following are a series of ideas, not all mine. These are a combination of ideas from various people all included as being complementary to a coherent Regeneration strategy and facilities on the two main sites our Town Centre and/or regenerative in their own terms. Where possible, funding sources are indicated. It's very important to understand that Regeneration will be enhanced by such ideas but that piecemeal redevelopment with cherry-picking parts of sites will serve few needs and miss many opportunities of a comprehensive approach, not least the level of funding that can be attracted and which we need.

THEMATIC

National Centre & Museum of Comedy



Bognor could/should play to its reputation of Fun by becoming **the National Centre of Comedy and Humour**. This would embrace Birdman, the restored Pier Theatre (dress up for Pier Music hall), a new entertainment complex in the town and much more. Visitors could come to see a **Mile of Comedy Statues**, such as Del Boy and Rodney, Tony Hancock, Tommy Cooper, maybe 7 chosen by local public. Also in the entertainment centre a virtual museum of comedy with film, video, and other information access. Added possibly by phases, subscription, Arts Council funding, business sponsorship. The Centre also hosting Live Comedy with Big Names, Musical Comedy etc. Could we become the annual venue for **National Comedy Award** with a prized **"Joker" trophy** – best stand-up, best new talent, best tv series, best quiz show, best music comedy etc. Media interest and focus on annual basis.

ESPLANADE/PROMENADE



Pier Arcade/Sheikhs to Esplanade site

The current operation moved to the Esplanade Theatre site. Pier owner retains freehold of property but gives long-term peppercorn lease to community body as below. A developer with planning permission for Esplanade site is willing to discuss this use and funding of construction for which they have money. Pier owner and Arun discuss favourable long-term peppercorn lease, this would be a new location for popular attraction not far from current site and with great views/access etc. Pier owner saves large annual maintenance costs. Disabled beach access also provided on Esplanade site. Pier owner appears willing to discuss.

Pier Theatre restored



Success above would enable plans abandoned for Pier Theatre restoration to be resumed, plus recovery of Pier walk. This would be a great re-location for Arun Arts who have experience and assets to enable community theatre to operate plus volunteer support. Heritage lottery support, peppercorn rental etc. The New Alexandra Theatre?

Promenade battery-powered [ROX?] Tram

Extending the day, season etc are accepted aims. We do have a motor train on the east side of the Pier,



seasonal. This new idea would use 2-car battery driven units, from Butlins to The Waverley, running seasonally April-end-September, guided by magnetic paint strip and/or sat nav. Various stops such as Regis Centre, Pier, Esplanade Theatre etc 4/6 units, decorated and also illuminated at night. Flat-fare? Payment by coin and/or bank card. Cost £40k a unit, one driver. Developer of RC site could help pay, the University could be involved in the science. Bognor's answer to the Blackpool Tram Fun

COMMUNITY

Town Hall as Community Hub - Civic Row re Belmont Street



Allied to the Regeneration of the Regis Centre site could be the redevelopment of the Town Hall as a **Community Hub**. The site would be sold to a developer (there is one), who would refurbish the Grade

II listed building as a Community Hub, Arun could lease-back space, the Town Council could have a secure longer-term lease (it has a 2-month licence currently), CAB could be accommodated as well as others, could there be interest in a Police office (this does not mean they would exit their London Road station), would there be room for the Library etc? Purchase: £650/750k? Refurbishment – similar? This, allied with a **new health centre on the Regis Centre site**, would create a **Civic Focus/Area** along Belmont Street.

Move Bognor Regis Medical Centre

Some months ago I was involved in a meeting which I brokered concerning the current location of the BRMC. There was a clear interest by the representative of the Centre in a proposal to move to a new, purpose-fitted Centre in Belmont Street within the context of a regeneration scheme. This was to be accessed by buses, cars etc and walking, with new facilities added. The funding would come from the developer and the NHS. This would release the current site for new use.

OTHER AMENITIES

Extend Sunken Gardens - southern arch - access to Hatters

An Electors Meeting rejected the Linear Park and endorsed the retention and improvement of the Sunken Gardens. Improvement could involve extension to the boundary with Hatters, which could provide new entrance/exit direct into Gardens. Electors suggested new southern arch entrance. Ideal to be handed to Community Gardeners aided by Town Force for maintenance. **A Developer is willing to fund in full.**

(1)Marine Park Gardens Lido/(2)Outdoor Arena

(1)The current gardens could become a very popular **Lido** venue served by buses, the tram, walking etc, seasonal only (but maybe ice-rink in Xmas period), sea-fed? Landscaped (screening trees along Kings Parade etc), concessions on the seaward side. Helps local business at that end of Promenade, safe bathing, supervision, fee access etc

(2)This has been suggested as idea for open-air music, beach sports etc, it's appealing, there could be concessions, venue for ROX etc. No location identified, or costs. I understand others also are advocating this be explored fully.

TRANSPORT ROADS & ACCESS

One way system in/out Town Centre

Living on Longford Road, the growing problems of vehicular ingress and exit are all too apparent. A successful Regeneration would increase the strain, so the proposal is to make **one-way Longford** and that part of Chichester Road between it and the A29 roundabout, inwards. The outward flow would be along **Town Cross** with few dwellings and lights at Chichester Road end. Linden could remain 2-way or if needed one way with access to Annandale, Victoria Drive from A29 roundabout no right turn from



Linden Road, also re Havelock which would be accessed from Longford, likewise Beatty and Clifton Roads. Bus stops inwards on Longford retained, on outward, stop at Linden would substitute, plus one on and the one just past Town Cross lights on Chichester Road. I discussed and walked this idea with a County Highways officer some time ago, the view was that it was feasible and could be beneficial, there would have to be public consultation.

Close East High Street to all traffic - divert buses via Belmont Street

Again, discussed this with WSCC officer as above, the view was that it was feasible, could be beneficial and that bus service provider would have to be agreeable. Stops at Town Hall/Medical Centre as above, access to Town Centre shops via Arcade. It has worked before indeed.

Pedestrianise west side of Waterloo Sq

This would allow access but also provide clear walk from Hothamton Sunken Gardens etc to seafront.

Social housing Covers

This has been mooted before, new housing for people in the Town centre could be very beneficial if a site e.g on A29 found for Covers. Retain brick building on Spencer Street? Community use?

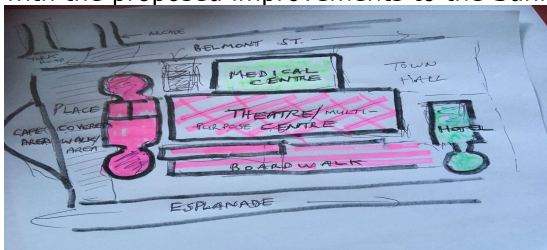
Project Sunrise Re-Purposed

Finally, I have been looking at the situation of one of the front-runners in the local Regeneration "game", with a view to creating a fresh perspective.

The Project Sunrise proposal is one I have followed, and supported, over several years. I will not, here, delve into the history, but simply summarise what's on offer:

- £90 million investment in two key areas owned by Arun Council
- Major boost to local employment
- Major new attraction for the town, a multi-purpose centre for entertainment, conferences and exhibitions
- Destination restaurant * 2 hotels
- Esplanade Boardwalk wth retail, restaurants etc
- Improvements to Hothamton Sunken Gardens and Place St Maur piad for
- landscaping and seafront features
- Covid-related health benefits
- ability for early start given planning consent exists

It has approached the task based on Masterplan principle of cross-subsidy between sites, paid for by incorporation of flats above ground floor on Regis Centre sites. However, Arun has pursued the strategy of separation of sites, choosing e.g. To try to offer hotel on Regis Centre site to Whitbread in land swap etc, or Coast2Capital funded improvements at Hothamton and Place St Maur. This approach, however, eschews major cross-subsidy benefits for the Town. This idea is solely mine, I discussed it with Tom Elliott, he is none too keen, I am bound to say, and that my idea would delay progress because of new planning consent being required etc. However My idea is to re-configure the PS scheme so that the multi-purpose centre goes onto the space that exists in the main scheme. That space faces Belmont Street, not a lot of use to be frank, offering little of attraction to resident or shopper/visitor. The diagram, based on PS scheme, suggests the placement, it is useful to understand that the rest of the scheme there remains "as is" EXCEPT that the flats could move to Hothamton, which would command, with the proposed improvements to the Sunken Gardens, the best sea views in the Town.



One additional benefit could be the building of a new health centre in Belmont Street as above. There also is the notion of covering the Place St Maur, automatic doors at each end, affording a covered walkway with cafe area between Esplanade and Arcade/ York Road. In a sense, the proposal recreates the Theatre Royal/Rex/Kursaal. One thing is clear, however – PS have spent generously to prepare and progress their scheme. **Arun would have to "stump up" to get this moving, and not impede progress, it would have to be a full commitment as landowner in a Joint Partnership.** PS have spent around as much as Arun, but they have something major with planning permission to show for it. If Councillors want such an approach they would have to convince PS that it would receive full support in every regard in order to retain the huge inward investment available via PS.

Summary

The foregoing are some ideas which CAN be realised for the improvement of personal, family, community and business life in this area of 63,000 people. They offer amenities, homes, jobs, they will depend on whether we get real Regeneration or not, they are presented for discussion, question, scrutiny.

Jan Cosgrove
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