

## **Briefing Notes on Bognor Regis Regeneration Board Meeting October 2017**

### **1. Celebration of 10 years of the Regeneration Board**

The Board took the opportunity to mark its 10 year anniversary with a celebratory cake and a toast to the Board's success over the last 10 years and for the future.

### **2. Presentation from Nick Smales, WSCC Director Economy, Planning and Place**

Nick highlighted the economic data and comparing Arun v. West Sussex there are poor comparative indicators around earnings, education, productivity, demography etc. Coming as he does from Hull, 76.7% economically active is brilliant, but Arun is clearly not performing as well as other local areas economically as West Sussex is 82.2%.

However he noted there is a level of change occurring as evidenced by the recent investment conference "Turning the Tide". Vacancy rates are improving which is a good proxy for positive change. He is aware of the new public realm, branding and BID work. In terms of place-making, he has walked round with Karl Roberts from ADC who explained the development sites and opportunities, and was able to explain what was happening on all the sites including Regis Centre, Hothamton, Splash Pool, Tech Park etc, and the "Platform" which is being part funded by WSCC. This is the railway station-based creative digital hub with links to the University. Nick remarked that to be a successful seaside town it needs a great beach and prom, but also an affluent catchment which Bognor Regis can demonstrate. As well as the Platform; WSCC has worked with ADC on the recent Investment Prospectus, the West Sussex Growth Plan elements for this area and visitor economy work with the Coastal West Sussex Partnership

The WSCC Growth Plan is going out to stakeholders imminently, with a draft plan due December/January, and being finalised by the end of this financial year. It is action based and aims to make a difference.

Nick was asked how the Growth Plan integrates with Arun DC plans, and it was confirmed that the district deal was at draft stage, and is about priorities for support. It includes 4 projects including Hothamton, and gives focus about the important things in Bognor Regis. Denise confirmed that Arun DC worked with WSCC on the district-level Place Plans and the priorities from there have been distilled into the Growth Plan to create a collaborative and aligned series of plans.

Raof Daud stated that what has happened in Bognor Regis over the last 10-15 years under the Masterplan has been good progress with a lot achieved. The authorities now have a key role to improve access to/from Bognor Regis and related infrastructure requirements. Nick said that working together is key such as at the Hub which is really co-ordinated and making the best of the available potential – the spaces at the Station are amazing. Hemmingway Design's involvement is great, but there is a need for the next steps to move-on with other new business accommodation. To be seeing collaboration between councils gives confidence to businesses. This Board is unique, with public and private agencies all working together.

### **3. Town Centre Regeneration**

Consultants have been commissioned around the Hothamton Linear Park development proposals including residential, retail etc. Designs have been drawn up for the park and car park in a boulevard style, creating a green lung with pavilions at either end. Public consultation on the design was held on 13th October, and around 120 people attended with many positive views expressed. The next step is for BR Regeneration Sub Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> December to receive a report with recommendations. This may be take the site to market, and will also include recommendations on the delivery mechanism i.e. a Development Agreement or other routes.

Regis Centre site: the council is in conversation with Whitbread about their long lease, and talking about a hotel/restaurant development on the site. Karl stated that the Regis centre aspirations for the Winter Gardens were ambitious and will need major external funding. The council was waiting to know more about the additional Growth Fund monies via the Coast to Capital LEP which includes funding for tourism and regeneration themes.

Denise Vine from ADC explained that as part of the council's Property Investment Strategy to generate future revenue streams the Arcade freehold has recently been purchased by ADC. The previous landlord had tidied up the empty units under pressure; but their inflexible terms had led to the many vacant units. The council is hoping to get the vacant units occupied soon and hopes to secure a diverse range of occupiers, and possibly use the space for creative digital businesses. The first floor has empty office accommodation. The purchase of the Arcade fits well with the neighbouring Regis development site, as it is the intuitive gateway to the town centre.

#### **4. Local Plan – Progress**

The examination in public has now been completed and officers are dealing with matters arising, and hope for adoption of the Plan in March-April 2018. The Homes and Community Agency had recently visited the area to see the housing sites identified and officers explained the problems with getting development in line with the Local Plan. Raof Daud noted that the reality was that if developers had bought land at high prices, they need to make a return. There are external issues such as skills gaps, rising construction material and labour costs; also by controlling supply, house prices remain high. Councils need to provide new council houses and shared ownership properties. Raof said that traditionally infrastructure had been publicly funded and built, but the model was now different and had switched to privately funded and built. However he felt that in future there would not be huge private funding going into infrastructure. The area will need to capitalise on the Growth Plans for Bognor Regis.

#### **5. Town Centre BID Update**

It was reported that one unit has been recently let in the York Road which is part of the Arcade units. Most new town centre businesses are service related – nail bar, tanning etc, which means that footfall is generated. The Business Warden service funded by the Police and Southern Co-op has been extended for a further year. Vacancy rate is reducing as is the national rate. Footfall increased year on year by 5.1%. The BID ballot was successful, and implementation work has started. It was noted that Toyubur Rahman receives a high level of support as evidenced by the overwhelming BID result.

#### **6. EBR Updates**

##### **a. Saltbox Planning Application**

A planning application has been submitted by Landlink Estates who confirmed that their Planning Performance Agreement with ADC has been worthwhile as dedicated case officers were allocated to the application, which has worked well. The application will be heard at the December Development Control Committee meeting.

##### **b. Hanbury**

The Hanbury planning application for Oldlands Farm has been submitted for change of use. The outline permission was granted for a big box location, similar to a B&Q outlet or large electrical retailer, and they are now applying for food retail with Lidl as the tenant. It was agreed that the Board would make a representation opposing the Hanbury application.

Raof Daud reported that the LEC site is now completely finished, and Sime Darby recently held an event to celebrate the occasion.

##### **c. Engineering & Digital Technology Park**

Professor Seamus Higgins reported that construction is going well and is on time and budget with the contractors managing issues as they arise. The degree course programme is lodged with UCAS and Year zero students have started.

#### **7. A27 Arundel**

A letter from the Board to Highways England supporting Option 5A was circulated. There was support for the same option across the major consultees with almost unanimous council support apart from South Downs National Park who were against all options. There was a clear desire not to have the same issues as at Chichester. It is understood the work must start by 2020 or the funding will be lost.

#### **8. AOB**

**Graffiti:** BR Town Council reported that their Town Force workers undertake street scene enhancements and graffiti removal. Recently West Sussex CC terminated the grant for graffiti removal mid-year and without notice, and will only pay piecemeal for graffiti removal on WSCC premises. Town Council has administered this service free of charge and it also covers the outer parishes, but now is not able to clean graffiti off premises apart from those that are WSCC-owned. The grant was only £6k pa. The Board agreed that keeping the town clean is an integral part of the overall regeneration picture, and that the service was clearly valuable. The Town Council will be liaising with WSCC and ADC to resolve the issue.