

Bognor Regis Regeneration Board

Response to Arun District Council's Draft Local Development Order (LDO)

1.0 The Bognor Regis Regeneration Board (BRRB)

The Board was established in 2007 to act as an independent advisory body, bringing together leading representatives from the key public, private and community stakeholders in Bognor Regis. The Board recognises that a collective and cohesive approach can generate and secure the economic benefits sought by those who live and work in Bognor Regis.

The Board has three key objectives:

- To collectively promote Bognor Regis as a great place to live, work, visit and invest
- To consider, give opinion and comment upon how to what extent planned and proposed developments contribute to:
 - the town's growth and development
 - addressing and overcoming the town's socio-economic challenges; and,
 - maximising benefits and opportunities for the town.
- To consider and evaluate strategies which impact upon the economic growth of Bognor Regis and offer comment, opinion and where appropriate modifications.

Board membership is drawn from the major private and public organisations including the University of Chichester, West Sussex County Council (WSCC), Arun District Council (ADC), Butlins and Sime Darby London Ltd. A full list of Board members and contact details can be found on the BRRB website: www.bognorregisregenerationboard.com.

2.0 Executive Summary

The Board supports the LDO as an important initiative in allocating and facilitating incremental employment land. This reflects the major objective of ADC's draft Local Plan (2011-31) of economic growth for job creation. ADC are to be commended in implementing the LDO hence de-risking these objectives by taking advantage of the Government's response to calls from stakeholders for more simplified and lower cost planning. The impact will be important in meeting the Board's objectives of reducing out commuting, and the over dependence on low paid sectors such as agriculture, tourism and low-level service industries.

The LDO covers three of the four sites that are identified in the draft Local Plan (2011-31) as forming Enterprise Bognor Regis which is supported by WSCC and the Coast to Capital LEP. This strategic approach has been persuasive in securing the allocation of Growing Places Funding for the proposed realignment of the A29 and in strengthening the case for Enterprise Zone status. It is strategically located outside of the main residential areas and well serviced by the Bognor Regis Northern Relief Road, the new A259 link, and A29.

The Board would like to make the following points regarding the detail of the LDO:

1. The phasing of the three sites should be as flexible as possible so that new jobs can be created if opportunities arise earlier than planned.
2. To encourage landowners and stakeholders to bring forward the sites for development as quickly as possible.

3. To maximize employment and the creation of higher skilled jobs there should be an emphasis, when possible, on B1 and B2 developments rather than class B8 for storage and distribution.
4. The LDO should be clear that locally based businesses can relocate to the LDO sites.
5. ADC should encourage all stakeholders to commit to the Bognor Regis Developer and Partner Charter.

3.0 Comments on Statement of Reasons

The Enterprise Bognor Regis (EBR) LDO is welcomed by the Board as an important facilitator to stimulate business and job creation in Bognor Regis. ADC's Local Plan fully recognises that the availability of employment land is a critical component in achieving economic growth and is required in the local area to avoid Bognor Regis continuing as a dormitory town with all that this entails – loss of income to the local economy, traffic congestion, poor local employment prospects and wages, etc.

It has been recognised over recent years that employment land needs to be identified and brought forward to generate new jobs, reducing out commuting (about one third of Arun's residents travel outside the District), and the over dependence on low paid sectors such as agriculture, tourism and low-level service industries. ADC has been proactive in encouraging a visionary approach to identifying employment land to meet the above objectives but also compatible with the new jobs required as new housing developments identified in the Local Plan are completed.

In 2012 WSCC allocated funds under their Kickstart Programme to assist in the progression and implementation of the EBR LDO. ADC are to be commended on successfully utilising this support to resource a project manager to liaise with landowners, developers, occupiers and statutory authorities to generate the LDO. The work that has been subsequently undertaken brought early benefits with the submission in February 2013 by Hanbury Properties of a successful outline planning permission for Oldlands Farm (an Enterprise Bognor Regis site) and in August 2013 a full application on part of the same site for the Rolls-Royce Motors Technology and Logistics Centre.

It is important to note that EBR has been supported by Coast to Capital LEP from 2011 when it was submitted by the LEP to the government for Enterprise Zone status. This was not granted but the LEP and stakeholders continued to support the delivery of economic growth in Bognor Regis. In their 2014 Strategic Economic Plan the LEP identified EBR as one of the most strategic growth locations in the south east into which investment will be targeted, including a major investment programme in transport infrastructure. This has resulted in the allocation of £13m from the Growing Places Fund for preliminary design work on the A29 realignment; a key infrastructure improvement when accessing the A27 from EBR. This is in addition to the £350m committed by the government for the A27 improvements. The LDO area will also be well served by the Bognor Regis Northern Relief Road which is scheduled to be completed in the summer 2015 providing improved west to east access.

The stated objective of the LDO is to foster economic growth and provide the opportunity for the development of preferred employment uses to benefit from an accelerated and

simplified planning process, and a reduction in planning fees. This facilitates early development of these sites as the LDO removes the need for planning permission for new business related development.

ADC has determined that economic growth for job creation is its number one priority. The Arun District Plan (2011-31) reflects this priority in Employment Land Policies. Policy EMP SP2 identifies a series of Strategic Land Allocations which includes the land at EBR. Policy EMP DM2 sets out the approach to the delivery of a mix of B1, B2 and B8 uses on four parcels of land: Salt Box, Rowan Park, Oldlands Farm, LEC airfield and adjoining land. It should be noted that the Lec Airfield site will be subject to a future LDO when a suitable road access to the site has been identified via the Bognor Regis Northern Relief Road link to the A259 Felpham Way. It is important that this is progressed quickly by ADC and stakeholders as it not only generates additional employment land (approx. 30ha) but will provide access to the town centre enabling access to Butlins and planned developments at the University of Chichester, Regis Centre and Hothampton Car Park.

4.0 Comments on LDO

The three LDO sites are co-located outside of the main residential areas and have the advantage of direct access to the Bognor Regis Northern Relief Road and the A29 providing access to the A27. They are also adjacent to the established Southern Cross Business Park which accommodates major employers including John Wiley, Solatron Ametek, JCC Lighting and Cameron Instruments.

The phasing of the three sites is stated to allow EBR to come forward in stages with the objective of balancing delivery of employment land with delivery of new housing over the plan period. However as economic growth is the overriding objective of the Local Plan the Board would encourage landowners and stakeholders to bring forward all sites for development as quickly as possible with high degree of phasing flexibility.

The proposed principle uses of Classes B1 (office, research and development and light industry), B2 (general industry) and B8 (storage and distribution) are specific by designated EBR zones. In total a maximum of 34,276 square metres is permitted in Class B1 and 22,926 square meters in Use Class B2/B8. Each class generates varying employment levels with B8 (storage and distribution) providing lower levels of employment. To maximize employment levels and skilled job creation there should be emphasis on achieving B1 and B2 development with B8 considered when the number of jobs to be created would not be significantly less than those which would be likely to be generated by Class B1 or Class B2 use.

The LDO does not state whether there are any restrictions on the displacement of existing businesses within ADC to the three LDO sites. Historically there have been a limited number of sites available for growth orientated businesses to expand in Bognor Regis and this has resulted in lost employment. It would be useful to clarify in the LDO that existing locally based businesses are not excluded from the LDO sites.