

Bognor Regis Regeneration Board

Response to Arun District Plan 2011-2031 Publication Version

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, Arun District Council, 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

BRRB considers that the Local Plan 2011-2031 provides a sound, well-reasoned and comprehensive vision for Bognor Regis positively addressing the economic and social challenges over the next two decades.

The Plan's strategic objectives include strengthening the economic base, providing local job opportunities through the provision of appropriate employment sites, better infrastructure including road access, quality affordable accommodation and the development of business support and partnerships, whilst reducing the need to travel.

The Local Plan fully recognises that the availability of Employment Land is a critical component in achieving economic growth. Arun District Council has worked closely with landowners to identify 69.4 hectares which has been designated Enterprise Bognor Regis (EBR). Employment land is required in the local area to avoid Bognor Regis becoming (evermore) a dormitory town with all that this entails – loss of income to the local economy, traffic congestion, poor local employment prospects and wages, etc. EBR will provide accessible sites to attract new businesses and also to retain local businesses that are growing. The 'shovel ready' status of the Oldlands Farm Business Park (one of the EBR sites) attracted Rolls-Royce Motor Cars to locate their new facility in Bognor Regis, scheduled for completion in 2015. ADC is implementing a range of initiatives to simplify future planning applications, including Local Development Orders (LDOs). The further planned development of an Engineering and Digital Technology Park on the University of Chichester, Bognor Regis campus, will promote, support and partnership opportunities for local businesses and generate revenue into the local economy.

Transport infrastructure has been comprehensively addressed in the Local Plan. There are important road initiatives which have been identified and along with existing schemes will address the need for an improved regional and local road network to cope with the projected growth in jobs and new homes. The £26m Bognor Regis Northern Relief Road (BRNRR) funded by development of new homes on Site 6 is scheduled for completion in summer 2015. This will open up the Enterprise Bognor Regis sites providing much improved access through Bognor Regis and the junction for a link road into the Lec Airfield Employment Land site. The Local Plan highlights the importance of the A29 realignment between Bognor Regis and the A27 Fontwell junction to alleviate problems of traffic congestion notably at the Woodgate level crossing. The importance of the A29 realignment to the local economy has been recognized with £13m funding allocated through the Government's Growing Places Fund. It is proposed that the balance of the project costs will be funded through developer's Section 106 planning obligations for the 2,000 new homes in Barnham, Westergate and Eastergate.

The Local Plan's strategic housing allocation supports ADC's vision of encouraging more working households to move in and be retained in the area. This will be achieved by providing quality affordable accommodation, thus complementing economic growth with transport infrastructure funding. The need for employment land to support local jobs and growth of the local economy is at the heart of the Board's Charter – to raise educational attainment and skill levels, raise average wages, improve competitiveness, and reduce out commuting. After a long period of consultation and deliberation commencing in 2005 with 'Issues and Options' to consider levels of housing growth, the vision and objectives of the emerging Local Plan were established with ultimately ADC identifying their strategic housing allocations. The district will now have a planned and coordinated approach to development rather than "planning by appeal" which has taken place in recent times as a result of not having up to date planning guidance.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment concluded that the total requirement for new homes in the Local Plan is 8,700 from 2015/6-30/31, an average of 580 per annum. This is in addition to the 2,320 homes identified between 2011/12 to 2014/15. The strategic allocation which is in close proximity to Enterprise Bognor Regis identifies 2,000 new homes in Barnham/Westergate/Eastergate. The scale of this development is said to deliver the necessary infrastructure to support the needs of the new community plus the A29 realignment to provide improved access to the A27 and an additional east-west route linking Westergate and Barnham.

The Plan recognises that the regeneration of Bognor Regis town centre is vital to capitalise on the growth in local Gross Value Added (GVA). The current mix of retail and leisure offering is not strong enough to effectively compete with Chichester and Worthing, encouraging residents to travel outside the district. The potential of the sea front location of the Regis Centre site along with the Hothampton site offers a unique opportunity for a regeneration scheme to provide a sustainable town centre for Bognor Regis meeting the aspirations of residents, ADC and developers.

The Local Plan's vision for growth in employment and new homes will bring a demand for improved consumer choice and competition. It is therefore vital that the town centre is an attractive destination to attract residents, visitors and businesses.

The Board's comments below will be focused on the major elements of the Plan promoting the economic regeneration of the town.

3.0 Employment & Enterprise (Policy EMP SP1))

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. They have worked with the landowners to bring forward potential development to the planning stage.

A series of Strategic Land Allocations (Policy DM6) has been designed to serve and promote economic growth. Taken together the allocations are branded 'Enterprise Bognor Regis' (EBR) and comprise four contiguous areas:

- Area A - Oldlands Farm 23.8 ha
- Area B - Salt Box Field 11.8 ha
- Area C - Rowan Park 3.3 ha
- Area D - Former LEC Airfield 30.5 ha
- 69.4 ha

ADC recognised the benefit of implementing Local Development Orders (LDOs) across the four sites with the assistance of 'kick start' funds available from West Sussex County Council (WSCC).

The LDOs will grant permitted development rights for new business-related development and allow owner-occupiers and developers to benefit from an accelerated and simplified planning process and a reduction in planning application fees. It will establish a regime of permitted development already conditioned to secure an appropriate level of mitigation as required and a measure of quality assurance in relation to use, layout, design and materials. It will not prevent or restrict other development (i.e. development not permitted under the terms of the LDOs) which will be dealt with in the usual way under the normal planning regime.

The LDO will initially cover EBR Areas A, B and C. The Lec Airfield site (Area D) will be subject to a future LDO when a suitable road access to the site has been identified via the BRNRR linking it to the A259 Felpham Way, which is reserved in the 2003 and emerging Local Plan. The benefits of ADC's approach has been the 'shovel ready' availability of Oldlands farm (Area A) which received outline planning permission for a Business Park in February 2014 and subsequently Rolls-Royce Motor Cars were granted detailed planning permission in August 2014 for their 400,000 sq.ft Technology and Logistics Centre. The positive impact of this important global company expanding into Bognor Regis is already being seen with 200 new jobs and other businesses being attracted to the Business Park.

EBR is recognized and supported by Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (C2C LEP). The LEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) optimises the use of public sector and private sector investment, together with resources from Government and the EU. The SEP identifies EBR as one of the most strategic growth locations into which investment will be targeted, including a major investment programme in transport infrastructure. The SEP identified 4,800 jobs and 140,500 sq m of employment space as a direct result of EBR. C2C is continuing to promote EBR to the Government for Enterprise Zone (EZ) status which will

bring financial benefits including Business Rate Relief, superfast broadband and Tax Incremental Financing.

The SEP also identifies within EBR the importance of the continued development on the University of Chichester, Bognor Regis Campus. The University recently invested £12m in the School of Enterprise, Management and Leadership (SEMAL) in Bognor Regis which has proved a very valuable resource for local businesses and the community. It is demonstrably supporting local business with its range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes and its business start-up support services and incubation facilities. It also has experience of supporting local businesses through Knowledge Transfer Programmes.

The success of SEMAL has led to a further £15m investment proposal from the University for an Engineering and Digital Technology Park which is anticipated to bring 300-400 additional students to the Bognor Regis area generating an estimated annual £3-£4m into the local economy.

A further component of the LEP's SEP and an integral element of the Local Plan is transport infrastructure. This is covered in the next section:

4.0 Transport Infrastructure (Policy T SP3)

The Government investment in regional and local road infrastructure has been negligible in the last two decades. The main east/west A27 trunk road has significant pinch points along its coastal route and is a proven deterrent to economic growth in the Coastal West Sussex sub region. It is pleasing that the local authorities and business organized Action A27 campaign has recently convinced the Government to fund local improvements: the Arundel by pass, improved roundabouts on the Chichester by pass including the A259 from Bognor Regis and the A29 junction at Fontwell where the A29 from Bognor Regis joins the A27.

A major road project has been forthcoming with the construction of the Bognor Regis Northern Relief Road (BRNRR). This £26m route will take the A259 away from the built up areas of Bognor Regis allowing improved access between Chichester, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton. The first section will be opened in December 2014 with full completion by the summer of 2015. It is significant that this project has been totally funded by the development of 750 new houses on Site 6 which are currently being built in the parishes of North Bersted and Felpham under part of the developers' Section 106 planning obligations.

The proposed generation of 4,800 jobs in EBR will require investment in the local road infrastructure which cannot be solely delivered from the proposed housing developments. The importance of the BRNRR cannot be over stated in enabling access to the EBR employment land. The Local Plan recognizes the need for a link road from the BRNRR to the Lec Airfield site, opening up this additional employment land and providing benefits for access to/from the town centre. The Rolls-Royce Motor Cars investment decision was heavily influenced by the improved access into the Oldlands Farm Business Park from the A259.

The Local Plan highlights the importance of the A29 realignment between Bognor Regis and the A27 Fontwell junction. The primary purpose of the new road alignment would be to alleviate problems of traffic congestion along the existing A29, notably at the Woodgate level crossing which sees the barriers down to traffic for a significant amount of time. It would allow housing and employment development opportunities to be realised.

A recent study commissioned by ADC undertaken by the consultants Systra Ltd marks the proposed A29 realignment scheme 5 out of 5 for expected economic benefits and meets important objectives of economic regeneration including reducing the 23% of residents that out-commute, encouraging a growth environment for existing companies and providing conditions to encourage new investment. The study's estimated boost of £177m per annum to the local economy through direct and indirect job creation will be a very significant contribution to the local economy of Bognor Regis. £13m Growing Places government funding has been allocated through C2C LEP towards the £36m cost of the A29 realignment.

The Local Plan identifies a strategic housing requirement for at least 2,000 homes in Barnham, Westergate and Eastergate. The homes within close proximity of EBR employment land will realise developers' Section 106 funding obligations providing similar benefits that have been generated from the previous Site 6 development. These funds will make a significant contribution to the costs associated with the A29 realignment facilitating improved local infrastructure for the new homes and business and employment opportunities in Bognor Regis.

The road infrastructure plans are fundamental in bringing together ADC's strategic vision for employment and housing. The four main road initiatives: BRNRR, A29 realignment, link road into the Lec Airfield site and A27 improvements are necessary to support future economic growth.

5.0 Housing Delivery (Policy H SP1)

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment concluded that the total requirement for new homes in the Local Plan is 8,700 units from 2015/6-30/31.

The major strategic housing allocation in the Local Plan for the Bognor Regis area is for 2,000 new homes in the Barnham/Westergate/Eastergate villages. The development is ideally located for access to the allocated EBR employment land and the mainline Barnham railway station. The realignment of the A29 will provide major access through the strategic site with an additional east-west route linking Westergate and Barnham. The level of housing development will secure significant Section 106 contributions towards the required infrastructure in addition to community healthcare, education, social and leisure provision.

The size of the development is important in bringing important mitigation points to the loss of greenfield space in the three villages:

- Improved road infrastructure improving travel times from Bognor Regis EBR to the A27 Fontwell junction
- New two form entry primary school with day nursery
- Expansion of existing secondary provision by approximately 360 pupils
- Expansion of 6th Form provision by approximately 140 pupils
- Expansion of GP surgery and a new dentist surgery if demonstrated to be required
- New community centre
- Open space provision including a country park, allotments, generous gardens, amenity green space
- Green ring around the perimeter of the development for pedestrians and cyclists
- Affordable housing allocation

The above initiatives will be funded from the private sector developers through their Section 106 planning obligations. It is unlikely that this would be possible under piecemeal developments.

The strategic housing allocation supports ADC's vision of encouraging more working households to move in and be retained in the area by providing quality affordable accommodation, and complementing economic growth with transport infrastructure funding.

6.0 Bognor Regis Town Centre Development (RET SP1)

The vision for Bognor Regis was established in the Bognor Regis Masterplan published by ADC in November 2004. The key objective was a revitalised town centre fulfilling its potential as a sub-regional centre for shopping and entertainment.

This led to a joint agreement between ADC and St.Modwen on the redevelopment of the town centre which was signed in 2007. However the economic recession in the intervening years prevented any progress and it was mutually agreed to terminate the agreement in September 2014. Currently ADC is inviting residents and other interested parties to bring forward their schemes for town centre regeneration. The proposals will be reviewed and presented to the Full Council in the summer 2015.

The vision from the Masterplan has been carried forward into the Local Plan promoting a mix of activities - shopping, entertainment, employment, education and housing – generating a more vibrant town centre. The potential of the sea front location of the Regis Centre site offers a unique opportunity for a sustainable scheme to meet the aspirations of residents, ADC and developers.

The Local Plan's vision for growth in employment and new homes will bring a demand for improved consumer choice and competition. It is therefore vital that the town centre is an attractive destination to attract residents, visitors and businesses and hence benefits from the growth in local GVA.

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