



To Arun District Council

I should like to register my proposal for regeneration of the Regis Centre site.

This is a personal submission and represents my view at this time.

As an elected councillor I will be examining all proposals that come forward and may well change my view as a result.

In any event I shall support the majority view of my electors when decisions on this matter are made.

I believe the following can be viable in the true sense of regeneration, where increased trade in the Town is included in the calculation, not simply whether or not a scheme is profitable for developers.

Of course detailed work needs to be done but in essence my proposal has the following principal elements –

1. Retain and extend the Regis Centre car park south to the road to create more parking for shoppers and visitors, and convert it to cash or card 'Pay by Foot', so users only pay for the time they use.
2. Construct 2 (possibly 3 floors) of modern offices each of approx. 30,000 sq.ft. on the old fire station site adjacent to the Town Hall and relocate the WSCC offices from Durban Road to the new building. Securing WSCC and The Citizens' Advice Bureau as reliable 'anchor tenants', together with rental income from an extra floor of office space, would make this element a viable proposition.  
  
Adding a new southern main entrance together with some re-modelling of the southern aspect of our Town Hall would give this new combination 'one stop' Civic Centre a more deserved presence looking out to sea, and be more practical to access, especially by car.
3. Retain the Alexandra Theatre (as is, or re-modelled) inside a modern 'iconic' structure ( promised in Arun's original plans) up to 5 storeys in height to include a fly tower and extension to 500 seats for the theatre, a large multi-purpose space for exhibitions, conferences and entertainment, and a roof garden/food hall on the top floor with views of the sea and the Downs. The building would also house rentable areas for indoor leisure attractions and pursuits including retail.
4. Winter heating for the whole site to be provided by one central facility employing latest 'green' technology and solar power generation and natural air cooling built into the design of any new build.

5. The whole scheme to be project-managed by the Council or a non-profit 'Public Realm' partner organisation set up for the purpose, saving the need for developer profits.
6. Partner considerations / Arun Arts Ltd. and Whitbread PLC.

My proposal does not preclude a further leisure development on the site as the car park and adjoining areas are largely retained. As we move out of recession other leisure elements can be added to complement our sea front strategy and town centre improvements, which in my opinion should come before major development which loses much of the Regis Centre car park and surrounding space.

Arun District Council has already received many millions of pounds in council tax from the 74 Mountbatten Flats built when this valuable leisure site was 'halved'. The loss of this last sea front site to more flats, which in themselves do not directly contribute to regeneration, is presently opposed by the majority of residents, and would limit future growth of our 'Leisure Heart', as it is described by Arun Council.

#### Notes

##### 1. Car parking.

To qualify this as a genuine regeneration project bringing increased trade for Bognor Regis, extra parking needs to be created, not just retention of existing spaces, as 80% plus of our visitors will travel by car for years to come.

Chevron parking on the sea front would also assist as any leisure attractions will also require spaces for staff. Sea facing parking on the sea front would also encourage family visits 'picnic style'.

The Regis Centre car park is Arun's most profitable District-wide. Losing it completely or largely to resident spaces for flats will be counter productive to increasing trade, and costly to Arun.

Conversion to 'Pay by Foot' is long overdue in all major Arun car parks to encourage greater use. Our own consultants' reports show this system is preferred by users who are encouraged to stay longer as each stay is not time limited and they only pay for time they use. Chichester and Worthing have already introduced this method of payment.

Arun has considerable funds already earmarked for car park improvements which should be invested in the Regis Centre car park as part of any re-development on the site.

## 2. Anchor tenants..

WSSC was originally a promised partner in re-generation as a 'blue chip' anchor tenant. Re-locating WSSC to the Regis Centre site would bolster our Town Hall as a one-stop shop for residents. Also, with the development of our Enterprise Zone more land at Durban Road is likely to be made available for housing. This would be supported by residents as outlined in our forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan.

Visitors to the newly extended Town Hall and Citizens' Advice Bureau would add 'guaranteed' footfall to the site all year round. Parking for this facility would dovetail neatly with the evening economy, as day spaces would be vacated during the evening.

The extra modern office space created in such pleasant surroundings fronting the sea would be attractive to a modern Internet-based company, further contributing to the viability of the scheme, both in rental income and employees use of the surrounding leisure facilities and eateries.

## 3. The Regis Centre.

The 'blighting' of development of this building by the St.Modwen plans has prevented Arun Arts applying for substantial grant aid from theatre and arts funders. Now that this planning blight has been removed substantial grant aid is perfectly attainable to contribute to a re-modelled or re-built Regis Centre.

Retaining a mainly volunteer run community theatre with support from the University of Chichester and an extension to 500 seats (plans already drawn) plus a fly-tower makes this element a viable proposition not requiring subsidy.

Staging shows in a multi-purpose hall environment is not practical, and loses the important 'intimate' atmosphere. Shows need rehearsal, scenery and lighting set up time which require use of a purpose-built theatre space.

Exhibitions and other larger events also have similar 'competing' set-up requirements, causing further 'overlapping' and limiting of earning potential.

It is imperative that a separate hall space be provided for exhibitions, indoor markets, conferences, larger entertainment events and the like. This is perfectly possible on the existing footprint of the present Regis Centre, without imposing on the Place St Maur, which is our main link between the town and the sea front, or the car park which is essential if new visitors are to be attracted.

I believe a large hall would also be viable in its own right and is much needed in Bognor Regis which doesn't presently have its own space for larger events and functions.

#### 4. Heating and environmental control.

One 'central' modern heating facility for the whole site using the latest technology would save money and contribute greatly to its overall viability. Together with the use of solar panels on the new buildings and natural air cooling for the Summer months included in any new build, such a facility could more than pay for itself in savings in energy costs and set a new 'green' standard for Bognor Regis development. Grant aid may also be available for this element of the scheme.

#### 5. Project management

It is disappointing that Arun seems slow to follow up on suggestions to manage re-development themselves or investigate use of a non-profit public realm organisation already in existence. This would ensure profit from any development is retained by the community and re-invested in our Town.

This is especially important as outright sale of this prize sea front site at the 'bottom of the market' may not acquire 'best value' now, but it is highly likely that any development will increase in value and earnings as the country moves out of recession and the value of sea front building land inevitably rises.

#### 6. Partner considerations.

Both Whitbread PLC and Arun Arts Ltd. have leases in the Regis Centre with 30 plus years still to run. Such leases could be costly to 'buy out' so it is important they are 'traded in' as part of any re-development.

For Arun Arts Ltd that runs the Alexandra Theatre, retaining and improving the theatre whilst ensuring their continued involvement in its running, should provide sufficient compensation.

It is generally known that Whitbread PLC is interested in building a 60 bedroom hotel on the site so their interest too must also be negotiated.

It would be possible to site a new hotel on the north side of the Regis Centre Park but I believe the loss of parking spaces would limit the viability of the site. Much better, I believe, the hotel be built on the Hothampton site, more central, nearer to the railway station and bus links, and Fitzleet and Hothampton car parks.

Yours sincerely



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