

Report to Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development

April 2022

Endorsement of preparation of design: Bognor Regis Esplanade Public Realm Improvements

Report by Director of Place Services

Electoral divisions: All in Bognor Regis

Summary

This proposal forms part of the Arun Growth Deal that is a joint commitment between Arun District Council (ADC) and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to focus partnership resource and investment on economic growth priorities. This includes the redevelopment of the Bognor Regis seafront, comprising of the Regis Centre site and the surrounding public realm improvement projects at Place St Maur and the Esplanade.

The enhancement of the Esplanade supports the economic recovery of the coastal town, aligned with the Key Themes in the County Council's Economic Plan (2020-24) and the Council Plan (2021-25). The scheme will help to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by promoting the visitor economy of the coastal town and provide opportunities for the hospitality and events sector. Businesses, tourists, and residents will benefit from accessible community spaces and improved sustainable travel routes between the station, the town centre, and the seafront.

The County Council working in partnership with ADC will take forward the design of Bognor Regis Esplanade Public Realm Improvements (BREPRI) to crossing facilities and landscape enhancements to the Bognor seafront highway adjacent to Place St Maur and The Regis Centre. These proposals received positive feedback from an ADC public engagement exercise in 2021.

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, endorses the preparation and commencement of design for the Bognor Regis Esplanade Public Realm Improvements scheme as set out in the report.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 In August 2018 the [Arun Growth Deal](#), identified the Bognor Regis Centre and the seafront as a regeneration site. This includes the Esplanade, as a priority to support the recovery of the West Sussex coastal economy.
- 1.2 The regeneration of Bognor Regis as Arun's oldest and largest seaside town is a core strand of the [West Sussex Economic Plan](#). The County Council has been working in partnership with ADC for many years supporting regeneration through the Coastal West Sussex Partnership and improving the visitor experience through initiatives such as the Experience West Sussex Partnership.
- 1.3 The key objective of the Growth Programme is to champion the growth of jobs and enterprise. The West Sussex [Our Council Plan](#) underpins this and sets out the council's priorities for the future and guides the activities and investments made by the County Council.
- 1.4 One of the key priorities for this project is the creation of 'a prosperous place.' The key objective is to create an environment where businesses will thrive and support a skilled workforce with infrastructure to support business, and create a place where people want to live and work. WSCC investment in BREPRI is strategically aligned and reflects the key themes outlined in the Economic Plan (2021-24):
 - Theme 2: Protect and Revive the Coastal Towns
 - Theme 6: Protect and Revive Tourism and the Visitor Economy
 - Theme 8: Capitalise on Digital Infrastructure and Technology
- 1.5 Upgrading the seafront infrastructure will provide improved public realm and crossing points across the Highway between the beach and the town, creating an accessible and connected community space. The road could be temporarily closed to through traffic for special short-term events in the future to provide enhanced opportunities for business, tourism and the visitor economy.
- 1.6 The Esplanade public realm improvements form a fundamental part of the Bognor Regis Seafront regeneration site. This includes the planned renovation and extension of Alexander Theatre within the Regis Centre, that has recently been awarded Levelling Up Funding (LUF) and the adjacent Place St Maur public realm plaza project, currently on site, that received a contribution from the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (C2C LEP). The co-ordination of Government grants and County Council capital contributions will enable the town to 'build back better'; recognise the significance of the Bognor Seafront area to West Sussex coastal town cultural, tourist and visitor attractions; and create new places to do business. These investments and interventions aim to help to alleviate the impact of Covid-19 on local businesses and the visitor economy.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 ADC led consultation work (as set out below) drew good levels of support for the Esplanade Public Realm Improvement concept. Turning the concept into a place-making growth project would provide a significant opportunity to design people-centred urban spaces with multiple social and economic benefits including:
 - Creation of quality landscapes, with clear routes and desirable places
 - Improving the safety of the public realm with inclusive and safe spaces

- Supporting sustainable travel and healthy lower carbon environments
- Building strong local support by listening to stakeholders and partners

2.2 The BREPRI project will create attractive, sustainable, and accessible public spaces, enhancing key areas linking the town centre to the seafront, and improve public realm landscape for residents and visitors to enjoy, with new planting, and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS). Environmental improvements support carbon reduction and the renaturing of the town centre and seafront, making it a healthier place. They will also promote community wellbeing benefits by encouraging active travel such as walking and cycling.

2.3 Project management of the BREPRI design would be overseen by the Highways Authority and Growth Partnership teams and decisions taken via WSCC governance. The Arun Growth Board, made up of representatives from WSCC and ADC, will be a key stakeholder group and kept updated on progress against key milestones within the programme.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

3.1 The Council and ADC Growth Partnership have explored several potential projects to clarify which would have maximum impact to support the recovery of the Bognor Regis Seafront and town centre economy and provide benefits to the local community. In particular to determine the best way to complement the public realm improvements underway at Place St Maur and the levelling up funded improvements for the Regis Centre.

3.2 In this context the key alternatives explored were the best way to improve the public realm in a way that would best support business and the visitor economy. This focused on the extent of any closure of the Esplanade to traffic to promote entertainment and a pedestrian friendly environment. A scheme design that would facilitate a full or seasonal road closure was rejected because it was not likely to be fully supported by the public and it would take considerable time to progress with no guarantee of success. The recommended approach is to build on the existing practice of temporary road closures to support events and to create an attractive public realm.

4. Engagement and advice

4.1 In spring 2021, ADC carried out consultation on the concept for the Esplanade, as part of a wider engagement on Place St Maur regeneration scheme designs. Positive feedback on the sketch design for an improved Esplanade layout (shown in Appendix A attached below) encouraged ADC to progress a separate Esplanade concept study (completed September 2021).

4.2 ADC has actively engaged stakeholders including local councillors, Bognor Regis town council, Bognor Regis Regeneration Board, businesses, and residents who overwhelmingly supported proposals to improve the Bognor Regis Seafront and the Esplanade public realm space.

4.3 The ADC concept layout for the Esplanade has been informed by professional landscape designers (LUC). In addition to the review of the Esplanade public realm space, ADC also appointed Traffic Consultant (Woods) to undertake traffic modelling to examine several potential highway interventions including the potential implications of the proposed concept layout. The traffic modelling project, in part, examined the implications of installing enhanced pedestrian crossings on the Esplanade as well as partial closure (enabling short term

activities) to provide the Highway Authority with assurances these interventions would not have a deleterious effect on the operation of the highway in other parts of Bognor Town Centre.

- 4.4 On approval of the recommendation the BREPRI project will be taken through the next stages of preliminary and detailed design. A Road Safety Audit (RSA 2) will be carried out to confirm the design improves safety for users e.g., for pedestrians and cyclists. If adjustments are required to parking and/or speed limits this will be covered by public consultation on any Traffic Regulation Orders before the County Council as Highway Authority signs off the final compliant design.
- 4.5 The project team will identify, inform, and engage with local stakeholders including, residents, businesses, landowners, district, town and county council as the scheme progresses into detailed design.
- 4.6 The County Council Cabinet Member for Finance and Property has been consulted.

5. Finance

- 5.1 To progress the BREPRI project requires an estimated £0.431m of capital investment. This estimate is to complete the design stage and has been produced by WSCC highways team. The cost accounts for all standard elements of classification and structure: including Surveys, Project Management, Design Professional Fees, and design contingency fees at each key design stage.
- 5.2 ADC has carried out initial concept design work for this project and traffic study using LEP funds. The County Council’s Capital Programme will fund next stages of preliminary and detailed design and investigation costs of £0.431m, a cost envelope for delivery of works will be developed as designs progress. At this early stage an indicative estimate shows an additional estimated £1.369m is required to complete delivery of the project (total of £1.8m). This will be subject to further governance to approve the final scheme design.

5.3 Funding Sources

The initial funding of £0.431m enables the design of the Bognor Regis Esplanade Public Realm Improvements project to progress and will be funded from the £5m Growth Programme allocation approved in the proposed schemes section of the capital programme.

	£m
Approved Growth Programme allocation	5.000
Littlehampton Public Realm improvements	(1.253)
Bognor Esplanade Public Realm improvements project design	(0.431)
Bognor Esplanade Public Realm improvements project delivery (early estimate to be confirmed)	(1.369)
Remaining Growth Programme funds	1.947

5.4 Table of Proposed Expenditure

	22/23 £m	23/24 £m	Total £m
Profiled Cost	£0.391	£0.40	£0.431

Corporate Funding/Borrowing	£0.391	£0.40	£0.431
Total	£0.391	£0.40	£0.431

Note: estimates assumed a decision enabling WSP appointment end of March 2022.

Expenditure on design will clarify estimated project cost envelope for delivery stage, that will be subject to corporate governance and further decisions.

5.5 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the proposal represents good value**

The BREPRI currently meets key criteria within the Council Plan and our economic ambitions to support the revival of Bognor Regis as an important Coastal Town. It has a positive Benefit Cost Ratio and the project can build on the ADC LEP funded concept design work. It will also complement the LEP funded Place St Maur works and the Levelling Up investment in Bognor Regis.

(b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

Public realm improvements are anticipated to reduce future highway asset maintenance, as improvements will have defect and warranty periods, and use high quality durable materials that extend life and sustainability of assets, which reduces need for maintenance interventions.

6. Risk implications and mitigations

6.1 Summary of Key Risks and Mitigation.

Key Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Buried Utilities Impacting Scheme	Project team will liaise with Statutory Undertakers, check utility records, backed up by trial holes and radar surveys – latest information
Objections from Residents and Business Users	ADC engaged with local stakeholders on concept design, which had positive support from Councillors and public. WSCC will continue to engage with key stakeholders, residents, and businesses to ensure support for landscape design and upgrades to crossings and parking - as required
Objection to Traffic Regulation orders	Advanced notice and discussion through the engagement process and sufficient timings of publishing TROs. Allowing for objection/review period concerning any changes to parking areas that might impact on construction programme
Financial Risk Management	The design costs are estimated based on developing the Arun Concept – partners agreed it is important that the project remains within original scope.
Delivery Timescales	An experienced project team has designed similar public realm schemes, engineered solutions, and managed supply chain to keep project on track.
Construction Inflation	Current material and labour costs could reduce effective budget, seek to use standard products and value engineer solutions, while retaining a scheme as close to original concept as possible

Key Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Maintenance revenue implications	The designs will provide improved quality of landscape and sustainability of materials and expected to reduce short-medium-long term maintenance with revenue implications. The Highways Authority will approve final design and take on management of Highway following an agreed defects period, with extended warranties to cover certain materials.

7. Policy Alignment and Compliance

7.1 Legal Implications

The extent of the scheme will be retained within WSCC Highways Adoption areas, therefore the WSCC project team advised by WSP will prepare relevant documents associated with the preliminary and detail design and consult with the public if any Traffic Regulations Order(s) are required e.g. for parking changes, before Highways Authority approval can be given, and works proceed on site.

7.2 Equality Duty and Human Rights

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as the design progresses and the feedback from the ADC consultation did not indicate any discriminatory concerns. It is anticipated that an improved environment, including an upgrade of materials and provision of sustainable routes for travel will provide benefit for pedestrians, cyclists and users of non-motorised transport, and the scheme is intended to have a positive social impact.

7.3 Climate Change

The Esplanade is an existing area of public road and pavement space which is proposed to be upgraded and extended. Where possible, existing materials will be reused and reworked to make them suitable and extend the life of the asset presenting opportunities to reduce the scheme's carbon footprint by removing the need to import new materials.

Improving the walking and cycling connections along the Esplanade, and between seafront, town centre and railway station would help remove some motorised vehicles from the area and reduce air pollution and CO² emissions.

The design features areas of planting with new street trees, increasing the overall biodiversity net gain with potential for sustainable urban drainage features.

7.4 Crime and Disorder Reduction Assessment

At this point no implications relating to the Crime and Disorder Act have been identified. An Esplanade design will look to improve the landscape of the area, where people walk and cycle, aiming to improve security and safety.

7.5 Public Health

The BREPRI scheme provides new footway and cycleway connections which would enable residents to make journeys by foot or bike which would support improvement to health and wellbeing.

7.6 Social Value

The Esplanade scheme will provide improvements to the public realm areas on the seafront. The improved look and feel of the area is intended to encourage community connections and sustainable modes of travel between the station, town centre and seafront.

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Contact Officers:

Nick Burrell – Strategic Growth & OPE Manager and Tom Gillham (Growth Programme Delivery Manager)

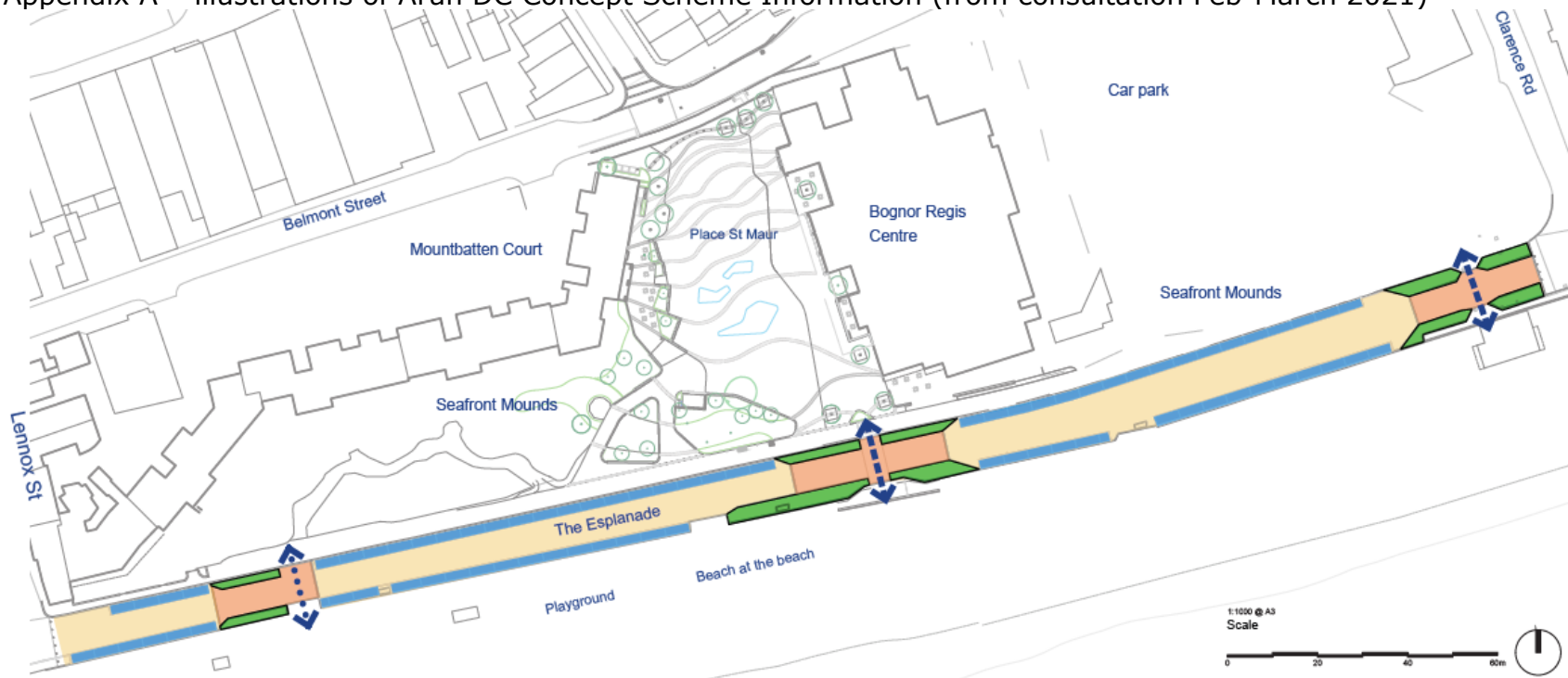
Appendices

Appendix A – attached below - illustrations of Arun DC Esplanade Concept Scheme (consultation information Feb-March 2021)

Background Papers

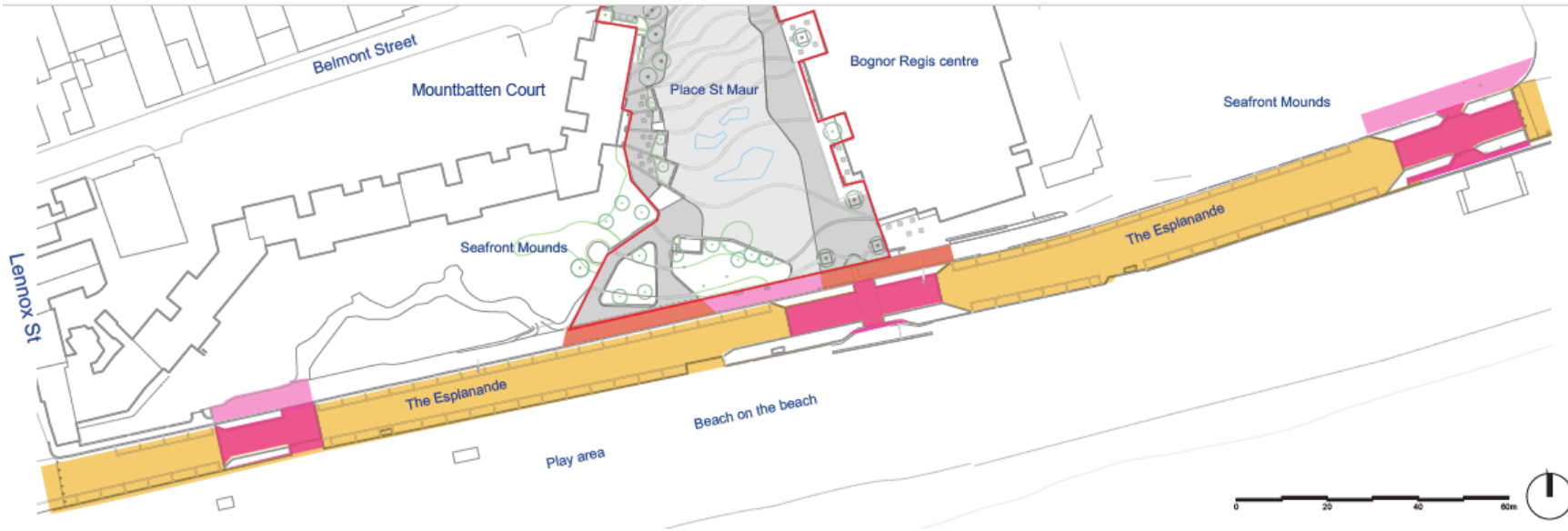
None

Appendix A – illustrations of Arun DC Concept Scheme Information (from consultation Feb-March 2021)

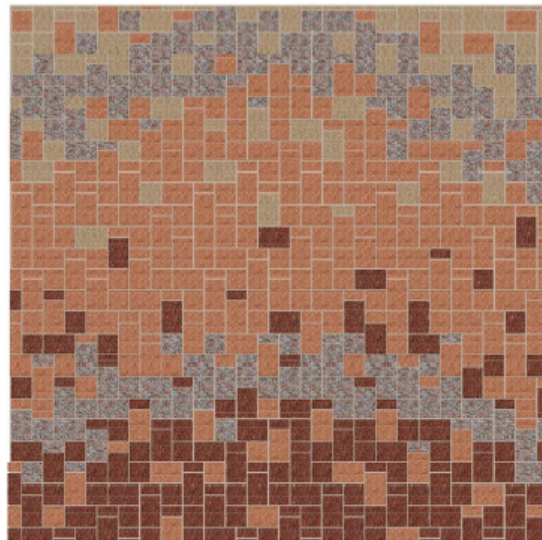


Key:

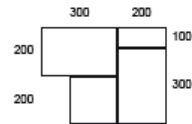
- Proposed parking spaces - 70no. approx.
- Pedestrian-friendly zone with improved connections to town centre and seafront.
- Proposed planting beds at pedestrian crossing points.
- Raised table.
- Pedestrian crossing (traffic light operated)
- Secondary crossing (Pelican or similar TBC)



Block Paving Patterns to Match Place St Maur Specification



Dimensions



Proposed Surface Treatments and Usage

- Place St Maur proposals (2021-22)
- Block paving to match Place St Maur main plaza (pedestrian use)
- Coloured macadam with bands of block paving (pedestrian use)
- Block paving to match Place St Maur main plaza (Vehicle use)
- Colored macadam in single colour (vehicle use)