

Appendix 9 – Bognor Regis Town Centre Health Check

Introduction

In order to understand the resilience of the town centre towards potential impacts from new development it is necessary to undertake a “health check” that reviews its performance against a series of indicators set out in the Practice Guidance (at paragraph 005 Reference ID: 2b-005-20140306) as follows:

- diversity of uses;
- proportion of vacant street level property;
- commercial yields on non-domestic property;
- customers’ views and behaviour;
- retailer representation and intentions to change representation;
- commercial rents;
- pedestrian flows;
- accessibility;
- perception of safety and occurrence of crime; and
- state of town centre environmental quality.

In undertaking our assessment we have visited the centre and consulted various data sources including:

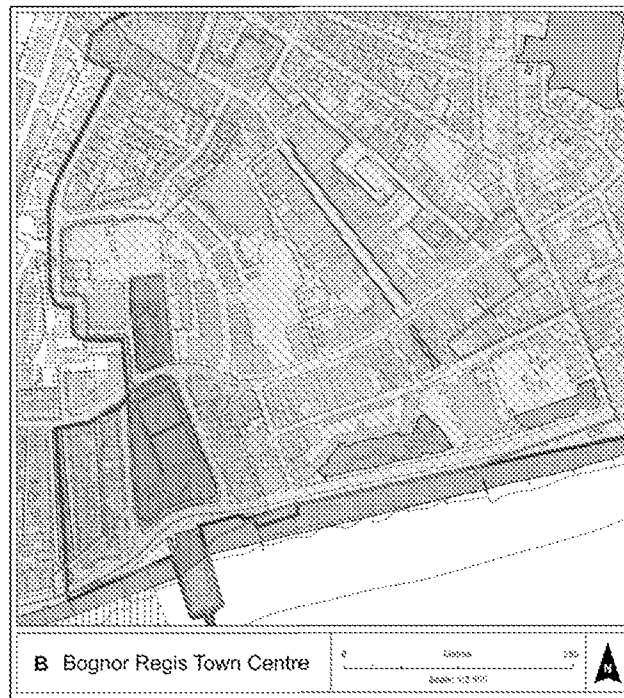
- Arun Local Plan 2018
- Arun Retail Study 2013
- Police.uk

Overview

Bognor Regis town centre is the largest settlement and retail centre in Arun District. It is located approximately 13 kilometres south east of Chichester and 25 kilometres east of Portsmouth.

Bognor Regis is a popular seaside tourist destination and its town centre’s character and mix of uses is reflective of its dual role as a service centre for residents and as a focal point for tourism.

The retail centre itself is located to the south of the town close to the seafront. The primary frontage extends along the pedestrianised London Road and The Arcade, with extensive secondary areas. These areas can be seen on the Proposals Map extract below.



Diversity of uses and retailer representation

The table below summarises the mix of uses identified by Mango in its October 2018 survey of the town centre.

Use	Number	Percentage of total units
Class A1 Convenience	17	6.2%
Class A1 Comparison	90	33.0%
Class A1 Other	54	19.8%
Leisure uses	58	21.2%
Class A2 (business) uses	31	11.4%
Vacant	23	8.4%
Total	273	100%

The dominant use within the town centre is comparison goods shopping, with the number of units well in excess of the national average. The town is well represented by national multiple traders including Boots, Sports Direct, Savers, Shoe Zone, Peacocks, Wilkinsons, New Look, WH Smith, Superdrug and Burton. These are focused on the pedestrianised area of London Road. The town also includes a high number of smaller independent stores.

In response to the 2018 household survey, some 28.6% of respondents visited Bognor town centre for comparison goods shopping weekly or more frequently, and only 10.7% never visit.

Convenience provision in terms of unit numbers is relatively low and below the national average. However provision does include a Morrison's supermarket, Iceland and Tesco

Express. The 2018 household survey illustrated that the Morrison's store is the third most popular foodstore in the town and at the time of our visit it appeared busy and well used.

The centre also offers a diverse range of cafes, take-aways and other goods and services typically found in seaside towns of this size. Tourist uses are focused on Norfolk Street and Lennox Street. There remains a more limited choice of mid to higher end restaurant uses in the town centre.

Vacancy rate

The town centre has a vacant rate of 8.4% which is well below the national average of GOAD surveyed centres of 12%. The majority of vacancies are located in secondary areas and there is evidence of redevelopment of a number of these for residential use. There are a number of vacancies within The Arcade but this reflects the smaller size and independent retailer focus of these outlets. For example, units 7 & 8 are both vacant but are only 333 sq ft (30 sq m) and 248 sq ft (20 sq m) respectively and are available to let on short leases of 3 years through Fludes.

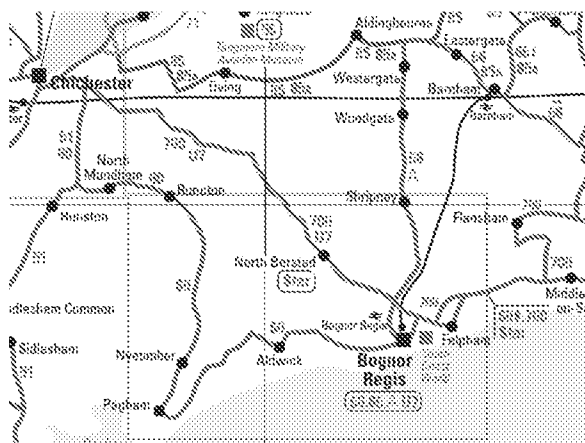
The only notable vacancy in the primary area is the former Store Twenty One on London Road. This comprises a irregularly shaped unit of just over 600 sq m available at a rent of £95,000 through agents SHW.

Pedestrian flows

The main pedestrian flows are along the pedestrianised section of London Road. From our own observations there also appears to be reasonable pedestrian flows between London Road and the Morrison's store.

Accessibility

Bognor Regis town centre is served by a main line railway station within easy walking distance that offers services across the south coast and to London. It is also served by regional bus services and an extensive network of local bus services operated by Stagecoach.



Road access to the town is good, with links to the A29 to the north and A259 to the north west.

The town centre has three short stay car parks, at the Regis Centre (175 spaces) , Fitzleet (343 spaces and Hothampton (201 spaces). There are also two long stay car parks and a number of seasonal car parks.

Cycle accessibility is good and there have been recent improvements to the strategic cycle network (National Route 2) linking the town with Littlehampton as well as the opening of part of the promenade to cyclists as part of that route.

Perception of safety and occurrence of crime

Latest data from the Police indicates that there were 121 recorded crimes in the central Marine ward in October 2018, with shoplifting the most common crime in the retail areas of the centre. Reported cases of anti-social behaviour was limited.

Town centre environmental quality

The town centre of Bognor Regis is of reasonable and improving quality. There has been a concerted effort since the formation of the 2004 Bognor Regis Masterplan to regenerate the town, culminating in a number of initiatives including:

- Gardens by the Sea;
- Turning the Tide Conference, September 2017;
- The Coastal Communities Fund bid which secured £1.65m of regeneration funds for the new public square at the station;
- The new Hotham Park café;
- The formulation of a town centre BID in April 2018 to generate £700,000 to safeguard town centre management and take forward priority projects; and
- Public realm improvements to London Road.

Conclusions

The town centre of Bognor Regis appears to be healthy when considered against the key indicators of vitality and viability, with good national retailer representation, a broad range of independent goods and services, low vacancy rates, notable investment in the centre's environment and a low crime rate.