

6.0 THE NEXT STEPS

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During the course of the study a number of options for the development of key opportunity sites were explored and discussed with the client group, as a means of identifying the key aspirations and priorities for the framework. Through that process it became clear that the aspirations of the client group were for a scale and quality of development that would involve:

- treating the Central Development Area on a comprehensive basis, including the potential for intervention in order to achieve development opportunities;
- aiming for a mix of uses and form of development for which there is not necessarily an immediate demand in the current fragile property market;
- ensuring that new development should not incorporate major retail and commercial leisure opportunities that might compete with the new centre at Westwood Cross;
- creating a new market in Margate and retaining the flexibility to capitalise upon future opportunities that cannot necessarily be identified at present; and
- an approach and strategy that is based on the long term and on achieving a new standard of quality for development in Margate.

Accordingly, the next steps identified here relate to creating the market and environmental conditions that will be a pre-requisite for high quality development of individual sites in the longer term.

Continuing priorities

The highest priorities should continue to be:

- the regeneration of the Old Town; and
- securing the funding for Turner Contemporary, ensuring that it starts on site as soon as possible and carrying out associated works.

These two initiatives have already had an impact on perceptions of Margate, and their continuing progress should continue to feed through into more developer/ investor confidence.

Regeneration of the Old Town

In particular, in terms of the regeneration of the Old Town, immediate efforts should be concentrated on:

- preparing a detailed design brief to guide the development of the Fort Hill site, considering it together with the adjoining Arcadian site in separate ownership, and bringing forward a high quality development of this site;
- upgrading Margate Museum in the heart of the Old Town so that it can function more effectively as a draw into the Old Town;
- environmental improvements to enhance pedestrian links along Fort Road, to east west routes to the seafront, and to the lower High Street, with improved pedestrian crossing points where necessary;
- preparing an environmental improvement and traffic management strategy for the lower High Street to create a pedestrian priority environment that will help to attract specialist retail and A3 uses into the area.

The key long term emphasis should be on continuing work to create the north south pedestrian link from the Market Square to a reconfigured Cecil Square, with the associated development and public realm works and the provision of an alternative servicing location for Marks & Spencer.

Turner Contemporary and associated works

Turner Contemporary will start the process of changing Margate's offer and will help to draw in a broader range of visitors and to extend the season. It is crucial that the Rendezvous site and the harbour wall are considered together with Turner

Contemporary so that the landmark building has a setting of appropriate character and quality. This should include:

- a detailed feasibility study into the reduction of space allocated to highways on Fort Hill and the potential for any land released to form a development parcel.
- preparing a phased development strategy for the Rendezvous site so that development can be intensified as market conditions improve.

Initially this should focus on providing:

- a landscape setting for Turner Contemporary, in the form of a new public space on the seafront, with performance area and public art;
- a reconfigured yacht compound;
- a development of the RNLI lifeboat station as a visitor attraction;
- car parking, preferably on several levels; and
- new pedestrian links to both the Winter Gardens and Fort Hill (for the Old Town).

In the longer term, this should aim to promote a mix of uses including a destination restaurant, high quality visitor accommodation and mixed use buildings with gallery/ studio/ specialist retail/ catering uses and residential on upper floors. The area under consideration should be extended to include the Winter gardens.

New priorities

New priorities for regeneration are identified, these being:

- creation of a leisure/ tourism/ recreation/ mixed use zone incorporating the Dreamland/ Arlington sites and Marine Terrace;
- the revitalisation of the beach area;
- creating the new movement infrastructure to remove through traffic (on a seasonal basis) from Marine Terrace; to provide new access to the Central Development Area and to provide new car parking; and
- securing development of key residential sites.

Dreamland/ Arlington sites/ Marine Terrace

The key new priority should be to secure the redevelopment of the Central Development Area, based on the comprehensive treatment of the Dreamland and Arlington sites, together with buildings fronting Marine Terrace.

Clearly, in the current fragile property market, a mix of uses and form of development that is in line with client group aspirations will be difficult to achieve without intervention.

There are also a number of technical issues, for instance flood risk, that will need to be addressed in addition to urban design and value generation on these key sites.

Any proposals for the conveyance of the scenic railway to another party, the Council for instance, should be accompanied by a detailed assessment of the associated liabilities, and an appropriate sum to ensure that these are covered for the foreseeable future. Similarly any proposals for the relocation of the Scenic Railway should be accompanied by an expert assessment of the implications for the structure, fabric etc. The Council should ensure that it takes expert advice in evaluating assessments such as these.

The client group should consider the potential for taking an active role in land assembly and redevelopment of these key sites through measures such as:

- setting up a public or public/ private partnership as a regeneration vehicle;
- acquiring leasehold and freehold interests in property by private treaty if possible;
- using CPO powers if necessary to secure a comprehensive approach to detailed masterplanning and redevelopment; and
- encouraging the preparation of a detailed masterplan for the whole area.

The client group recognises that a redevelopment of the Central Development Area to secure the aspirations for high quality will require a longer term strategy while the perception of Margate is being changed by the other existing and new priority initiatives. Whilst not permitting permanent development that would compromise longer term aspirations, consideration should be given to a number of interim and temporary uses that would reinforce Margate as a visitor destination. These include:

- seasonal leisure/ entertainment, such as fairs, circuses, rides;
- markets for instance crafts, book and French markets; and
- temporary car and coach parking.

Beach revitalisation

The revitalisation of Margate beach should be considered as a key new priority. This will aim to refocus the seaside attraction on the beach itself, one of the best features of Margate.

The process of animating the beach can start to take place with the current patterns of vehicular movement through the town centre. However, without a more attractive pedestrian promenade along Marine Terrace and improved pedestrian spaces and crossing points at the Station roundabout and the Clocktower junction, the beach environment and activity will remain somewhat separate from the wider central area and its full regenerative benefits will be lost.

A detailed action plan is required for providing and managing new and improved beach infrastructure, beach activities and catering/retailing, all to the highest possible standard.

Creating the new movement infrastructure

Detailed highway proposals and a transport assessment should be prepared to test alignments for:

- the proposed new link road between All Saints Road and Eaton Road (bearing in mind that much of the Arlington multi-storey car park may need to be retained in the short to medium term); and also
- the upgrading of Marine Terrace as a pedestrian priority route.

The client group should consider the potential for the acquisition of land if necessary to achieve this link, which is vital if the full potential of the seafront as a visitor attraction is to be realised.

Residential sites

Royal Sea Bathing Hospital

It is our understanding that the planning permission for the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital is essentially a viable proposition. Efforts should continue to bring forward the development and re-use of this important historic building and its site, which has now been vacant for some time and can only decline if that vacancy continues. The client group should consider the potential for taking an active role in bringing this significant residential scheme forward in a manner that achieves the aspirations that are set out in this document.

Block fronting Marine Gardens

This is a prime location for a residential led, mixed use, development that could re-use the listed buildings with new build elements in a sympathetic manner, to create attractive and marketable new residential units and improve the quality of environment in this important location. The client group should consider the potential for taking an active role in land assembly and redevelopment if necessary.

