

# Exmouth Queen's Drive Phase 3 Visioning, Investment and Development Plan

## Introduction

East Devon District Council wishes to appoint a consultant to prepare a vision and development plan for the Queen's Drive Phase 3 site, one of Exmouth's most important locations for visitors and local residents.

This appointment is a pivotal opportunity to lead/influence the regeneration of Exmouth – bringing great design and innovation to this key coastal development site. The site itself offers the opportunity to be a major asset for Exmouth and a significant attraction for a much wider geography as does the water sports centre, restaurant, retail, training facilities and public open space to be built alongside.

Phases 1 and 2 of the renewal of the site are moving forward following reserved matters planning approvals. Phase 1 is the relocation of road and car park and Phase 2 is the development of a water sports centre and associated space. This commission is to focus on the visioning, planning, viability and delivery of Phase 3 which has been identified in planning for new high quality leisure and mixed uses appropriate to this seafront location.





The commission will involve engaging with our existing Development Partner, Grenadier Estates for the water sports centre (Phase 2), with the local community of Exmouth and a wide range of organisations, businesses and individuals inside and outside Exmouth who have views, expertise, investment and ideas that can help to inform a new future for the Queen's Drive Phase 3 site and its positive wider impact.

**The Vision and Plan will identify how the Phase 3 Queen's Drive site can be renewed to:**

- Offer a better range of uses and attractions to local residents, visitors and other users. Improving quality of the seafront and leisure experience and exploring an innovative and more compelling mix that the location could offer.
- Be a more attractive and well designed place and offer more for the growing population of Exmouth.
- Contribute to repositioning Exmouth to compete regionally, nationally and internationally as a coastal visitor destination.
- Reflect the geographic location of Exmouth, journey times including the relationship with Exeter and beyond.
- Address seasonality to lengthen the visitor season and support the creation of a more sustainable and viable coastal economy.
- Create an all-weather, leisure destination that provides leisure opportunities into the evening and night time.
- Provide opportunities to enable emerging talent to thrive in the coastal economy.
- Attract a more diverse range of visitors/local residents.

Improve the permeability of the site making it more relevant to modern uses and improving the resilience of the leisure offer.

- Reflect change especially in the leisure and tourism market including the commercial realities and funding or investment opportunities that would need to underpin any development plan.
- Compliment the seafront location, surrounding environment including the water sports centre, neighbouring public realm improvements and infrastructure.
- Secure a financial return for the council that recognises its overall investment and the importance of achieving best value.

**The consultant will deliver a visioning process and report that:**

- Identifies a future for the Queen's Drive site with a strong brand identity and a new energy.
- Creates a new offer and attractions that are a step change from a currently outdated and tired appearance of that part of the seafront.
- Promotes high quality and distinctive design and architecture of leisure and mixed uses that improves the site and wider seafront and beach environment.
- Addresses with the surrounding and wider offer especially the water sports centre developers to ensure a shared quality and complementarity of development.
- Enhances the quality of the public realm with new public and play space, events and performance opportunities, with connections to the beach surrounding areas.
- Builds on the existing qualities of the seafront and beach to strengthen the image and 'pull' of Exmouth overall.
- Extends the visitor season, increases evening use and attracts more people through the provision of a wider range of facilities.
- Identifies new business activity and more local employment.
- Reflects the current and future investment in other parts of the seafront and town as well as key strategies of influence including the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan and Beach Management Plan.
- Bring about the vision in terms of a new mix of attractions and uses on the site.
- Promote development and investment opportunities to potential investors, funding sources and operators with a view to securing financial return for the council that offsets its prior investment.

**The process will involve:**

- Working with East Devon District Council and the Exmouth Regeneration Board.
- The council is proposing to establish a forum as a sub-group of the Regeneration Board to support the consultancy. The skill and experience mix of this group would be the subject of discussion with the consultant to maximise its value to the process.
- The council will put in place an internal officer working group to support the consultancy project as well. This will include officers from the Regen Team, Economic Development, Planning and Environment with others as required such as engineering, legal and surveying professionals.

## Background

Exmouth is a town on the south Devon coast at the mouth of the Exe Estuary. It has its own rail line that takes 30 minutes to connect to the Paddington and Waterloo mainlines at Exeter's main station. Exmouth is 25 minutes' drive from Exeter International Airport and 20 minutes' drive from Junction 30 on the M5.

Exmouth is Devon's largest town and is growing in population. Visitor numbers, and the amount spent by them in the town, significantly reduced during the decade to 2014. Nevertheless Exmouth remains a great attraction especially its seafront, the best of which needs to be cared for and enhanced. The town marks the start of the Jurassic Coast and it's not only tourists who enjoy the town but local residents and the wider community across East Devon and Exeter who regularly visit.

Since the Second World War, the town's population has doubled in size to 36,000 and has a wider catchment bringing the total to 50,000 people (in comparison, Sidmouth has a population of 12,500). In the last 20 years alone Exmouth's population has increased by 17%. Exmouth's leisure infrastructure for local residents and visitors hasn't kept up by any stretch of the imagination.

Nor is Exmouth's population growth balanced. Demographic change means there are fewer younger people, families and those of working age and the proportion of over-65s is increasing.

Exmouth's demographic is changing. Population growth projections show that over-65s are increasing as a proportion of the total population while younger age groups are expected to decrease. Like other seaside towns, Exmouth exhibits low productivity and low wages. It is important that Exmouth's population growth should be sustainable especially in terms of creating new homes, jobs, businesses, visitor opportunities and economic success for the town.

We also have findings from our Visitor Survey carried out in Exmouth during the summer months last year. Exmouth current core visitor market consists largely of older visitors who typically visit in adult older groups and who are relatively affluent. However, visitor expenditure levels in Exmouth are below the averages for visitors to east Devon and Devon as a whole. Other factors at play for Exmouth include Devon Cliffs Holiday Park nearby where the summer population is 10,000 people but the holiday park works hard to provide on-site leisure facilities and entertainment.

Furthermore there are other new and exciting additions happening including Michael Caines' Lympstone Manor, Mitch Tonk's Rockfish restaurant and the Crossed Anchors micro-brewery for example.

## The Queen's Drive Site

The site covers the area between the old lifeboat station (next to the Ocean Centre) and the Maer open space. It is a 9-acre site in total of 0.2 miles in frontage and set behind nearly two miles of sandy beach from the Exe Estuary to Orcombe Point, the start of the World Heritage Coastline. To the south it meets the footpath and cycle path along the sea wall and to the north it borders a Bowling club.





Fig 5.1

The Queen's Drive site currently includes a car park and plans are in place to create a mix of temporary uses on the Phase 3 site from spring 2018 onwards pending long term change. A café also continues to operate on a short term lease and a former private play park was closed down in Sep 2017. The regeneration of the site into a new water sports centre, public realm and mix of leisure attractions will be delivered in 3 phases:

- Phase 1 is the road and car park which must be done first and is expected to start on site in the first half of 2018
- Phase 2 will be the water sports Centre, expected to start toward the end of 2018; and
- Phase 3 is the remainder of the site, including a prominent site for café/restaurant use on the beach side of the esplanade road.

The Journey Planner illustration (link below) indicates the sequence of these activities over the next couple of years:

[http://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/2307540/exmouth-new-seafront-leisure-attractions-journey\\_11-17.pdf](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/2307540/exmouth-new-seafront-leisure-attractions-journey_11-17.pdf)

There are no listed buildings or buildings of architectural merit within the site but there are some environmental sensitivities in the area. The land is within council ownership and the council wishes to retain freehold ownership as part of any new development. Tenants have been progressively departing from the site. The final remaining tenant is the café tenant on the beach side of Queen's Drive. They are on a lease and will be departing from the site in autumn 2018 or before then with one month's notice.

The exception is the Amusement arcade but this will be redeveloped for more car parking later on.



## Communities, Visitors and Regeneration

Tourism is a vital part of the local economy in East Devon, Exeter and the wider area. Visitors are attracted to the area by the character, heritage, culture, festivals, music, arts and crafts, food, drink, beaches and spectacular Jurassic Coast, river valleys, and the outstanding countryside and wildlife. For our residents, whether born here or moved here, the quality of life and wellbeing are exemplary alongside opportunities for employed and retired alike as well as school, colleges and a Russell Group university in Exeter for our young people preparing for work.

Some of the best successes in terms of regeneration of coastal resorts can be found in smaller locations such as Whitstable, Camber Sands, Little Hampton, and Padstow. In all these places, emphasis has been placed on the quality of the natural and built environment and a limited number of key projects which have served as a catalyst for regeneration. Great



seafood restaurants, contemporary arts centres, new leisure attractions such as Bournemouth's artificial reef, large scale events, and bold and distinctive architecture, such as the East Beach Café, have all contributed to a step change in the local economy.

The challenge for Exmouth is to maximise its potential by building on existing assets and introducing new attractions that cater for a range of people both local and visitors, existing and new. Based on experience elsewhere, it is evident there is significant potential to regenerate Exmouth and to develop a more vibrant and successful seafront.

## Policy and Information

The following links give access to various policy, analysis, consultation and survey documents of relevance:

<http://eastdevon.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-and-meetings/other-panels-and-forums/coastal-community-team/>

<http://www.exmouthneighbourhoodplan.uk/>

[http://www.exmouthneighbourhoodplan.uk/index.htm\\_files/NPSG-CD.pdf](http://www.exmouthneighbourhoodplan.uk/index.htm_files/NPSG-CD.pdf)

[http://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/680916/exmouth\\_masterplan.pdf](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/680916/exmouth_masterplan.pdf)

<http://watersportscentreexmouth.co.uk/>

<https://planning.eastdevon.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=OJPUGHGH00E00&activeTab=summary>

<http://eastdevon.gov.uk/coastal-protection/beach-management-plans/exmouth-beach-management-plan/>

## Scope of Visioning Exercise

Within the Queen's Drive Site Vision and Delivery Plan the following tasks should be completed:

### a. Review of baseline information & vision

The consultant will review the baseline information and research undertaken on behalf of the Council, Exmouth Regeneration Board and Exmouth Coastal Communities Team to date, along with planning and other relevant policies and any site constraints. This will involve desk top evaluation of existing information and fresh sites and wider professional assessment of the site.

The consultant will also be encouraged to bring forward research and intelligence from their experience that provides important insight for the project and evidence to inform project progress, consultation and discussion. A visual assessment of the location as is and what could be is highly important as well as statistics and evidence.

### b. Visioning and consultation process

The consultant will advise the client on their proposed approach to engaging with the local resident and business communities as well as a wide range of individuals and organisations inside and outside Exmouth with knowledge, expertise and resources to offer to creating and delivering a new vision and new development on the Queen's Drive Phase 3 site. The outcome will need to be both imaginative and practical.

Meaningful consultation, active and innovative, will be vital to the success and public acceptance of the process. It is important that the consultant is able to reach the breadth of interests that properly reflect the public, organisations and businesses. Younger

people, families, busy working people, creative and new businesses and more widely as well as those that normally respond to consultation exercises.

#### **c. Ensuring Commercial viability and Deliverability of proposals**

It is essential that development delivered on the site has commercial viability and is deliverable and sustainable into the future. We will expect the consultant to bring with them or work with commercial property expertise to undertake market testing at an appropriate stage of this commission and to work with the local authority in securing investors, funders and/or developers to bring the site(s) to market. The Council wishes to retain freehold ownership across the site therefore marketing and any resulting development propositions should take account of that expectation.

#### **d. Development and Delivery Plan**

The consultant will produce a draft and final plan which will include:

- A vision statement for the site setting out ambition and identity and the way forward to deliver the vision
- Land use and plan layout options and the potential for different kinds of new attractions, public realm and attractive commercial propositions. This will involve indicative design concepts, option proposals and associated visual representations.
- Due regard will need to be made to the existing planning approval for a mix of leisure uses. Design will be highly important and need to be both compelling, appropriate to place and a realistic proposition for funding, investment and a financially viable operation.
- A mechanism for assessing detailed proposals against the vision and development plan as they come forward and the delivery strategy, e.g. outline costs, phasing, funding, timing and organisations capable of investment and delivery.
- An investment plan and detail of how the consultant will help to secure investment and funding for delivery. This will include market analysis and a strategy for investor engagement and funding acquisition.

### **Timing and Outputs**

We expect that the commission will be completed within a four month period from appointment. Beyond that initial period we also expect that the consultant will be retained for a number of days to work on the delivery of the plan from visioning to development.

The following are expected to be completed during the initial period of the project:

- A project plan and timetable of key milestones
- Consultation and visioning with the breadth of local and wider stakeholders
- An interim report setting out the findings and proposals will be the subject of consultation with the steering group and key stakeholders
- A final report will include the vision and delivery plan containing the key findings and costed proposals for a mix of leisure uses, their development on the site and how they can be funded and delivered.
- Proposals for retention of services to support the project through to site development underway



- Regular meetings between the consultants and the project management group at key stages in the study. Their frequency should be set out in your submission with the venue to be agreed upon appointment

Three colour copies of the final document should be produced. The document should be suitable for reproduction in black and white. The full report and appendices should also be provided on CD or memory stick.

## **Management of the Commission**

The overall responsibility for the Study will be held by Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive – Development Regeneration and Partnerships. The Council's Regeneration Team and other officers will provide professional support and guidance to the consultant. In addition we will provide organisational support, information, desk space or other resources as required.

The council is also proposing a sub-group be formed under the Exmouth Regeneration Board to offer cross-sector local expertise and experience to the consultant. Detail of this offer to be refined in discussion.

The Consultant is required to nominate a named senior person to be in overall charge of the project and with whom the Council will liaise via a calendar of meetings and more informally

## **Information Required in a Proposal**

- A brief statement explaining your understanding of the Project Brief, including your advice on any additions or improvements that could be made to the commission
- A brief statement on the methodology you would adopt for undertaking this work
- Details of relevant experience and examples of similar projects undertaken by the organisation, and where applicable, the role of the proposed team members in those projects
- The staff proposed together with a resource schedule
- Details of any specific expectations of the Council in terms of administration or information
- Timescale for undertaking the commission with key milestones/deliverables
- Provision of an overall fee proposal and a cost breakdown by tasks.

Lastly, we will require confirmation in your submission that there are no conflicts of interest related to this commission for your organisation.

  
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