

# Exmouth Regeneration Frequently Asked Questions and Answers - Feb 2016

**1. Introduction** The following frequently asked questions and answers have been created to help people better understand where we are with the regeneration project in Exmouth and outlines the importance of investment and improvement for the town. This information will be updated over time as changes happen and regeneration projects move forward.

## **2. How is Exmouth doing?**

Exmouth is Devon's largest town and growing in population. Like all towns, it's constantly evolving and is a changing place which doesn't stand still.

Since the Second World War, the town's population has doubled in size to 36,000 and has a wider catchment of 50,000 (in comparison Sidmouth, for example, has a population of 12,500). In the last 20 years alone, the population has increased by 17%. The Council is very much aware that services and infrastructure need to keep pace with this growth to continue to meet the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors.

However, Exmouth's population growth is not balanced. Future projections are that all ages under 65 will decline as a proportion of population and the 65 years and over age group will increase. This demographic change means there are fewer younger people, families and those of working age.

### **Exmouth Town Profile**

Between 2011 and 2026:

9.5% decrease in 0-19 age

14.7% decrease in 20-44 age

9.7% decrease in 45-64 age

14.7% increase in 65-84

29.3% increase in 85+ age

*Public Health Devon, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Exmouth Town Profile 2013-14*

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.

## **3. How is Exmouth's economy performing?**

Retail under-performance - In November 2014 Property Week magazine identified Exmouth as No 2 out of 100 locations in the UK for retail development potential. The analysis reflected the gap between the reality and unmet potential for new retail as well as how the population is likely to grow and the quality of the town's leisure offer.

Chamber of Commerce - Exmouth's own Chamber has identified a need for improved leisure and shopping and for the town to make the most of its natural environment and attractiveness as a holiday resort. In particular, the Chamber wants to see promotion of water sports.

Rolle Enterprise Ltd - In making its case for the revival of part of the Rolle College site, Rolle Enterprise Ltd has previously highlighted that Exmouth has suffered over the years from the decline in the number of holidaymakers staying in the town and increasing dependence on Exeter for employment and retail provision.

Tourism – The number of overnight stays along with visitor spend across East Devon has been in decline for 10 years. Spend has fallen from over £150m to less than £100m. Overnight visitor stays fell from 800,000 to 475,000 (*Great Britain Tourism Survey, 2014*).

#### **4. What is changing for Exmouth?**

The Strand - Even in tough times, EDDC is investing in positive changes in Exmouth and good things are happening. The redeveloped Strand is now a cultural and social centre for Exmouth surrounded by thriving businesses serving all sections of the community and visitors. It is a site for festival events, Remembrance and armed forces occasions, the Christmas Cracker, markets and much more.

Premier Inn - This 60-bedroom hotel replaced an underused and out-of-date single storey Victorian building with the town's first affordable national chain hotel - a long overdue asset for Devon's biggest town. More than forty local people have jobs in the hotel and it is hugely popular bringing new visitors and visitor spend into the town all year round.

Ocean Centre - The Council worked with the private owner/developer of the Ocean Leisure Centre at the end of 2012 to make sure this delayed leisure development opened. East Devon LED is now running the facility and investing in making it a thriving indoor entertainment place with ten pin bowling, soft play, food and drink and rooms for hire. LED opened a new indoor soft play area and cafe in October 2015.

Exmouth Leisure Centre – The Leisure Centre has undergone a £2m major revamp underwritten by EDDC with new gym, studio space and climbing walls.

Exmouth Pavilion - EDDC has invested in a new bar area and flexible seating to enable the Pavilion to widen the variety of its events in an already popular schedule.

#### **5. What are the next changes coming for Exmouth?**

As well as the development of the water sports centre and Queen's Drive development site, there are a number of other projects underway for Exmouth.

Mamhead Slipway – Without Mamhead Slipway, Exmouth is not fulfilling its role as a leisure maritime centre. There is currently no large slipway between Bridport and Teignmouth. Mamhead is the main slipway for boat launching in Exmouth and has been shut for several years because it was worn out and unsafe. It has taken time to develop the right design and engineering for a better facility, to commission contractors and to time the reconstruction to satisfy environmental concerns (migrating fish for instance).

In March 2016, EDDC will be starting to rebuild Mamhead and return Exmouth to its previous and proper maritime status. A much improved and safer facility for boat launching will further strengthen Exmouth's local and visitor offer. To make this happen EDDC is investing £1.5m into the scheme.

Magnolia Centre and London Inn – The Council would like to see new life breathed into these vital town centre spaces with a more diverse retail and leisure offer linked to more efficient car parking provision. The variety and flourishing nature of businesses around the Strand shows what can be achieved with investment in public open spaces.

Estuaryside – The need for a long term solution to this important area of Exmouth hasn't gone away, even if the chance of a large supermarket has for the moment. The Rugby Club still needs longer term security and the Estuary side site has lots of ways that it could and should be improved in a way that compliments the rest of the town.

Sea Cadets – EDDC has been working with this important local community youth organisation to help them deliver a brand new building to replace a very old and tired one. EDDC has offered a grant of £150,000, on top of past costs in design and other services. The Sea Cadets have now begun work on the site in Camperdown and we can expect to see an impressive, new local HQ and training centre.

Coastal Communities Team – The government has given £10,000 to take forward an economic plan for Exmouth with a first stage document which has recently been submitted. This may unlock access to significant funding from central government for further investment to improve the strength and productivity of Exmouth's economy.

## **6. Where is development happening on Queen's Drive?**

The site covers the area **between** the old lifeboat station (next to the Ocean Centre) and the Maer. It is a 9-acre site. On the south it will meet the footpath and cycle path along the sea wall and to the north it borders the Madeira Bowling club. The Maer is a sensitive and protected site and will not be affected. Neither will the cricket ground, tennis courts or the bowling green. Similarly the beach will remain the same although we expect that the Queen's Drive development will attract even more people to Exmouth seafront and beach in and out of season.



**Queen's Drive Development Site**

## **7. What will the Queen's Drive development achieve?**

The Queen's Drive development is a place that can bring new investment into Exmouth that reflects the changing leisure expectations of residents, visitors and businesses alike. There will be new opportunities for more businesses and a wider range of users. There will be two distinct developments at Queen's Drive, involving two separate developers, with very different facilities.

## **8. Who will use the new Queen's Drive leisure attractions?**

The Council would like Queen's Drive to offer all-year-round entertainment, free-to-use public spaces and a free play area, new pay-to-play attractions, more for different age groups and a national water sports centre. The mix of attractions will be there for all the following groups and more:

- Family and couples nights out in Exmouth
- Three generations enjoying the space together
- Teenagers having a good time
- Watersports enthusiasts visiting from far and wide, staying and spending
- Rainy day and winter visitors
- Enticing the holiday park crowd into town
- Visitors using different accommodation
- Exmouth's stunning beach

Exmouth has a national reputation as a water sports centre and increasingly, is one of the best UK locations for kite surfing and as a centre for training and competitions. The water sports centre will create 45 jobs. The wider development is estimated to provide 175 jobs. Redevelopment and the refreshing of the town's leisure offer is important, as people's tastes change and different destinations at home and abroad compete for their attention. When new investment happens, people respond positively and the Strand and Premier Inn are evidence of that.

At the moment, the Queen's Drive development area is a private play area, next to a car park and including pay-to-enter golf, a play park and cafes. The play park and golf are weather dependent and are not always open throughout the winter.

## **9. What consultation has been undertaken?**

As well as consultation for the Exmouth masterplan in 2011, there was also consultation around the masterplan proposal called 'Exmouth Splash' (which we now refer to as 'Queen's Drive redevelopment'). This took place during Winter 2012/13 and was followed by further consultation on an outline planning application for the site in Autumn 2013.

## **10. Who was consulted?**

The Queen's Drive development proposals have involved the following consultation activity. There will be further open and public consultation as detailed development proposals come forward.

The breadth of consultation with local people and organisations has included:

- Several press releases and media statements
- Social media information including Facebook and Twitter

- Adverts on the Council website and dedicated webpages giving information and an online questionnaire
- Display boards set up in the windows of Thomas Tucker
- Councillors and officers setting up stall at the Christmas Cracker in the Strand and giving out 600 copies of information and consultation forms
- Information displayed at the college and assembly presentations to every student in years 7-11 with arrangements in the college to gather their views
- Consultation packs sent out to 1,000 randomly selected households from throughout Exmouth. Reminder letters sent out as well
- An evening and a daytime stall staffed at the Pavilion theatre with display panels and information
- Presentations given to the Exmouth Community Association and the Exmouth Residents and Traders Association on the proposals and people present encouraged to complete the consultation
- All district and town councillors asked to publicise the consultation and posters provided for the purpose
- Information sent to Devon County Council and Exeter City Council to publicise to their contacts
- All East Devon town and parish clerks contacted and posters sent to the four neighbouring parishes
- Posters, information and consultation questionnaires distributed to local businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, Exmouth youth and children's centres, police station and Devon Cliffs Holiday Park
- Posters and bulk copies of the consultation given out to the following for them to distribute to their customers:
  - Exmouth Leisure Centre
  - Exmouth Tennis Centre
  - Exmouth Library
  - Exmouth Town Council
  - East Devon District Council's Sidmouth Offices
  - Exmouth Tourist Information Centre
  - Exmouth Community College

This was the extent and variety of methods used to make sure that the people of Exmouth, their local organisations and businesses were aware and had the opportunity if they wished to comment on ideas for the renewal of the Queen's Drive site.

The developer of the Watersports centre has also undertaken consultation – see Q & A 12 below.

### **11. What is the current position with the Queen's Drive Development?**

It is part of EDDC's commitment to invest in Exmouth as it already has done in the Strand and will do on Mamhead Slipway.

The Council has outline planning permission for the site and is expecting to pay in excess of £1m for the new road and car park that will allow redevelopment to go forward on the rest of the site. To cover this cost, the Council is seeking a capital receipt from the

developer. The Council is not necessarily looking to make a profit on Queen's Drive regeneration, but would like to recover these initial costs as part of the financial deal with the developers.

Planning applications have been submitted to enable the road and car park development to start.

The Council has two development proposals for the site. One is proposing a water sports centre. The other is proposing a mixed development of leisure uses, and accommodation. The latter proposal differs from the existing outline planning permission in that it proposes residential units above some of the commercial ground floor uses.

It is the Council's preference to have hotel and/or holiday apartments on the site rather than residential and this is reflected in the existing outline planning permission. Development and investment proposals will be subject to more detailed negotiation, public consultation and the scrutiny of a planning process. Any proposals with or without residential use would have to satisfy the Council as the landowner and comply with planning and environmental requirements, including flood risk concerns.

## **12. What do the development proposals include?**

The development will be a phased approach (see map below). This is a practical approach and is designed to make sure that development gets underway as soon as possible. Where possible and practical, EDDC has offered tenants the opportunity to keep trading until we need their site for development. The aim is to avoid leaving sites derelict or boarded up for an unnecessary length of time.



Phase 1 (blue): The Road and Car Park – The road will be redirected behind the current car park. A new car park will be built behind the realigned road on the current mini golf site.

Phase 2 (yellow): Southern site (existing car park and road) - The Watersports Centre – The site between the realigned road and the seafront will see a new, high quality centre

for kite surfing, windsurfing and other water sports. The current proposals are for training rooms, offices and equipment storage. It will cater for local school groups and youth groups as well as adult users.

The development will also include a small number of units for business studio, retail and cafés and public space including an open air performance space.

This is a not-for-profit proposal that will be created ultimately for community benefit. The developer has already undertaken community engagement including meetings with Transition Exmouth, potential users, the watersports community and others.

The developer is currently looking at the design in order to provide the most sustainable, low-carbon site.

Phase 3 (purple): Remainder of the Site (former Fun Park, Model Railway and Harbour View café) - Mixed Development – There will be a mix of uses on the site involving both public and open space and a mix of built uses. The open space would include areas for public enjoyment, events and free play space for children alongside pay to play such as adventure golf and watersplash play. The buildings would include restaurants, bars and shops which would take up ground floor space to ensure that the street level is active in the day time and evening. The existing outline planning permission includes this mix of uses.

It also includes indoor leisure use. The development proposal includes a small multiplex cinema as an indoor activity which would complement but not compete with the indoor play provided by the Ocean complex next door. A small cinema complex will ensure all-year round use day and evening and would also attract new restaurants. The proposed cinema operator considers that Exmouth is of a sufficient population size to make a second cinema a viable and attractive proposition.

The existing planning approval does not include residential use but the proposed development does include some apartments above the ground floor restaurant/retail uses. The outline planning permission includes hotel and/or holiday accommodation but not residential. The proposal reflects the market view that the high quality design of buildings and landscaped areas, along with the mix of leisure development sought by the Council, makes most commercial sense if the site can include up to 40 apartments.

However, this is not finalised and further discussions will take place regarding these proposals.

#### The Red Area

The red area is not included in the development at this stage but in the future it is intended that it will be used as additional car parking spaces. The Amusement Arcade remains open.

### **13. What will happen to the Fun Park site?**

The Fun Park site will be redeveloped. To enable the whole development to start we need to use part of this site as a construction compound and to move spoil as the development progresses. This will also involve demolition of any structures and filling in the former boating lake. We will also need to make the overall site secure.

Keeping as much construction spoil on site minimises lorry movements in the locality and waste disposal costs. There are also a number of ecological constraints to the site which mean that grasses have to be moved before development can take place. This requires the developer/contractor to be able to have access across the entire site for movement of materials as the development progresses.

**14. When will the work on the road and car park start?**

We would like to begin works in 2016. Procurement, planning and legal processes are in hand to meet this target timetable.

**15. Will there be further consultation?**

The Council has held a number of previous consultation exercises (See Q&A 9 & 10) and is committed to providing information throughout this process. There will be further public consultation to come through the planning process. Detailed development of the Watersports centre site (Phase 2) and the mixed development site (Phase 3) will independently involve full public consultation on the respective proposals prior to any decision by the planning authority. The developer of the Watersports Centre is currently improving its plans to ensure the development meets the highest standards of sustainability prior to a consultation process.

**16. Will the land be sold on a freehold basis or long leasehold?**

The Council is retaining the freehold of the site and a long leasehold interest will be granted on the developments. The leases will set out what the leaseholders can do on the site in accordance with the approved development. In terms of Phase 2, the Watersports Centre will be run by a Community Interest Company in which EDDC will play a part.

**17. How have the developers been selected to deliver new development?**

The Queen's Drive site was marketed by our agents Jones Lang Lasalle (JLL) in 2014. The marketing information was emailed extensively to other agents and developers and reached over 4000 organisations. JLL received over 40 enquiries for further information on the site and had more detailed discussions with 10 interested parties. They carried out accompanied viewings with six firms. Following this exercise, the front part of the site was identified as being suitable for a Watersports Centre. In March 2015, three proposals for the remainder of the site were considered and the Council identified the preferred proposal which includes a mix of uses that conform to the outline planning approval with the exception of residential use.

**18. Why does the development propose residential use on part of the site?**

Residential development is not included in the existing outline planning permission but the Phase 3 proposal includes apartments as part of the wider leisure development. This will take the form of residential use at first floor level which could add value to the overall development, both financially and also in terms of design and usage. It is also an approach that gives the Council a better chance of recovering the cost of its investment in moving the road and car park as well as allowing for sufficient commercial income to deliver a high quality of building and public space design. It is normal for developers to require a profit from any development project as they are taking a risk in delivering the project. There is no proposal for residential as part of Phase 2.

**19. Why is the development including a cinema when there is already one in the town centre?**

There is a cinema operator who would like to open a multi screen cinema at Queen's Drive. They have undertaken their own market research and have identified a market for a new cinema complex for Exmouth and on this site in particular. Through the previous consultation, we received mainly positive responses regarding the cinema use from all ages. A cinema use is one that will also attract other businesses, restaurants in particular. Pizza Express, La Tasca or Nando's for instance are popular restaurants that will associate with a cinema if it is to locate into new leisure schemes.

**20. How many restaurants are being proposed and will there be demand for them?**

Currently the whole development is planned to offer a total of eight different food and drink businesses including cafes, restaurants and bars to cater for day time and night time use all year round. While this site has remained unchanged for a long time, Exmouth's population has increased steadily and its food and drink offer has been improving as well. EDDC also wants to bring new and more visitors to Exmouth especially to stay and spend money that will boost the local economy and create new jobs. The people of Exmouth will have less need to leave the town for a meal, family day or nights out and new visitors will mean increased demand for more choice of food and drink venues.

**21. How much retail use will there be and won't this take people away from the town centre?**

The current proposal is for three retail units. This is a modest amount of retail and is designed to focus on water and sports related uses such as clothing and equipment. The aim is not to detract from the town centre but offer goods appropriate to a seafront location such as beach wear and water sports equipment.

Connecting the seafront and town centre of Exmouth is a long standing challenge to be addressed through means such as improved signage and public transport. The revival of retail and leisure in Exmouth town centre and business has already been given a big boost by the Council's investment in the Strand but the Magnolia Centre presents a future challenge that needs to be tackled.

**22. Will there be open areas for people to relax and walk around?**

A key element of the Council's requirement for the area is to increase the amount of public space that is free to enter and available as space for meeting, socialising and relaxing.

At the moment the leisure areas include spaces that whilst people can access without payment, they have to pay to use the individual play facilities. Furthermore, the space is not openly available for public use or for events, other than those organised by the current operators.

The proposals provide for extensive public open space across the development site including outdoor seating in front of cafes, open air performance space and public free play areas.

The new leisure space will cater for all sectors of the community, including young children. Eating out at cafes and restaurants is an increasingly popular leisure attraction

for teenagers and adults alike and whilst there will be plenty of “play” our aim is for the site to become a destination leisure venue for all ages.

The public open spaces will be car free and the relocation of the current car park will mean that movement from beach to leisure facilities and play areas will be safer and in part, no longer requiring having to cross a road. Putting a bend in the road and reducing sight lines from the road with new buildings can be planned in ways that slows drivers down as well.

Exmouth will have a new place on the seafront for people to meet and relax whether they want to use the different mix of leisure uses or not. So Queen’s Drive will become a social and cultural space for Exmouth’s residents and visitors, as has been seen with the Strand.

### **23. What will the development include that is specifically for children?**

The Council is committed to the provision of open space and ‘free-to-use’ play space where there is none at the moment. The current proposal includes water play features, a free play area as well as a pay-to-play attraction such as adventure golf. The area will also be car free. In addition there are proposals for a multi screen cinema and restaurants that will have a family feel to them and appeal to all ages.

### **24. Why can’t the existing businesses remain on site? Could they have been part of the new development?**

In order to progress a comprehensive development on the site it is necessary for the council to have possession of the whole site. This involves demolition of existing structures across the entire site and the amalgamation of the existing leased areas.

In order for the developer to achieve this, it is important that the Council’s previous leases are brought to an end. All the businesses currently open on Queen’s Drive have had tenancy arrangements with EDDC as the landowner. Most of the leases have already come to the end of their term. As far back as November 2014, EDDC served formal notices on the tenants informing them of its intention to redevelop the site.

Where applicable, tenants have been offered financial compensation in accordance with the law relating to business tenancies. That process is now underway. Tenants have responded differently to the Council’s decision ranging from agreeing a compensation package to taking a legal route.

The Council is keen to support local businesses and see them thrive within Exmouth and the district as a whole. Redevelopment of the Queen’s Drive site will offer more opportunities for commercial activity than have existed in the past as well as more jobs, more attractive leisure activities and more reasons for people to use the seafront all year round.

### **25. Is it the case that the Council has kept tenants on short leases so they have not been able to invest in their businesses?**

The tenants have enjoyed lease renewals and the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act (LTA) for a long time: several decades in some cases. The Council does not agree that the lease arrangements have inhibited the opportunity for tenants to invest and refresh their premises and facilities. Seven years, with the protection of the LTA, is a reasonable length of time to encourage some modernisation by tenants. The benefit of

shorter leases is that the Council has charged rental levels that are low to reflect the lease duration whereas long lease arrangements are likely to have seen higher rents for tenants to pay and less to invest in improving and refreshing their offer.

**26. Why put a Watersports Centre at this location – isn't the water dangerous here due to the flow of the tides?**

This location is very suitable for a Watersports Centre. It is the location most used by kite surfers because there is no conflict with swimmers on this stretch of beach (bathing being prohibited). The Centre will be available for national and international events from where competitors and spectators will take part in and view competitions. It is entirely appropriate therefore that it is located close to the stretch of water that offers the best conditions for launching boards. The Centre will also be available as a base for training and tuition for young people, but these users will be taken from the centre to safer areas of coastline more suitable for tuition as has always been the practice.

**27. The location is liable to flooding so why encourage development there?**

The Queens Drive site is in Flood Zone 3 according to Environment Agency classification. Much of Exmouth's seafront and town centre is also in Flood Zone 3 including many existing homes and businesses. Flood Zone classification does not prevent development, nor does it mean that homes or businesses already in place should be closed. Businesses and residents have operated and lived on Exmouth seafront for a long, long time and will continue to do so. The Queen's Drive site itself used to have cottages on the site.

Flood Zone 3 designation does not preclude development but it means that flood mitigation measures will need to be a part of any development to the satisfaction of the planning authority and the Environment Agency. Because this will be a modern development it will be more flood resilient than other locations in Exmouth.

**28. Will sand blowing off the beach affect the development?**

Sand washing/blowing over the sea wall has been highlighted as a reason not to improve the seafront at Queen's Drive. This is a beach front location and like other seaside places we are used to the weather conditions. Sand accumulation is nothing new and it is dealt with as a matter of course. Businesses have operated in this location all year round and the same will be true of new businesses in the redevelopment.

**29. What will happen to the NCI Coastwatch Tower in the Harbour View cafe?**

A new lookout area for The National Coastwatch Institution will be provided as part of the redevelopment of a new restaurant proposed for the site of the Harbour View cafe. The National Coastwatch Institution will also be occupying the former First Aid Post building in the short term so as not to disrupt the service that they offer to water users. We have worked closely and positively with the NCI over recent years and are committed to ensuring their inclusion in the new development.

**30. Why do you need to move the road?**

The realignment of Queen's Drive will enable the development of the Watersports Centre to have direct access onto the beach. Moving the car park further back creates the space for a more attractive and modern seafront appearance. A car park is not an attractive

look to a seafront and the new architecture and open space of a water sports development will enhance the look of the seafront from land and sea.

The promenade area will remain so that people will be able to walk and cycle along the seafront at this point without being adjacent to a road. Families including young children will have a car-free space connecting the beach to the mix of attractions without crossing a road.

Pushing traffic behind the development will also be an opportunity to slow the speed of road users as well.

### **31. Will there be enough car parking when the new attractions are built?**

Within the development there is replacement car parking capacity at Queen's Drive. This will help in providing access for users of the Ocean, Watersports Centre and the other new attractions. We also have car parks at Foxholes and Maer Road with over 500 spaces between them. These car parks are underused especially in the evening and off-season.

### **32. Will the site be unused and for how long?**

Where possible the Council has given site tenants the opportunity to continue trading until their site is required. This is to minimise the length of time that sites will be unused or not in development. For example, notice was given to all tenants as far back as November 2014 but trading continued through 2015. We expect that the Harbour View café will continue to trade for the 2016 season while other site development gets underway.

Development of the whole site will take a few years as is inevitable in such circumstances with a site of this size and complexity. It will be necessary to board up the sites whilst development takes place to ensure that it is safe and secure. However, as the site is being delivered in phases, we expect that the Watersports Centre will be able to open up first since it is independent of work on-going on the remainder of the site. Importantly, there will continue to be road and footpath access along the seafront since the old road will not be completely closed until the new road is completed and opened. Car parking provision will also be retained throughout the construction works period with the new car parking opening as the old one closes.

The Premier Inn development for example, required the former Elizabeth Hall site to be secured and boarded during construction but that building phase was a necessary process to give Exmouth a hugely popular and attractive asset.