



“Regency Square contains some of the finest examples of Regency architecture in Brighton. Built between 1818 and 1828 on a site known as Belle Vue Field, it is assumed to be the work of Amon Wilds and his son, Amon Henry Wilds, and was financed by Joshua Flesher Hanson as a speculative venture.”
www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk

Introduction

Regency Square occupies a unique position on the Brighton seafront. On an axis with the West Pier, it has been a central part of Brighton life for nearly 200 years – and following the development of our newest seafront attraction - the British Airways i360, looks set to retain this key status into the future.

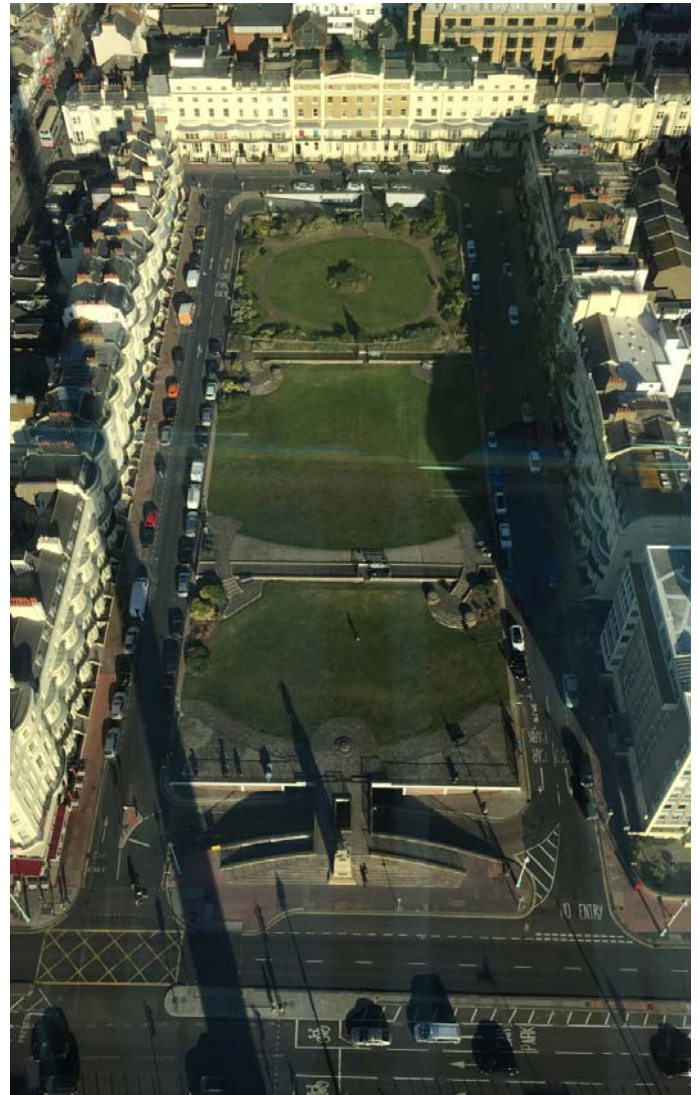
There is however a need to renew and reinvigorate the Square to create a garden worthy of the place it occupies in the city's Regency heritage. The garden enriches the lives of the surrounding community, contributes to the wider city objectives, will be sustainable for the long term and complements the world class BA i360 attraction.

As part of the planning consent for the BA i360, 1% of ticket revenue must be provided by BA i360 and used to secure “Environmental Renewal, Maintenance and Improvement Works” within the West Pier Area. It is estimated that this fund will direct around £30k per year to Regency Square garden for the lifetime of the BA i360. It is this resource which will support the regeneration of Regency Square as a coherent whole and underpins this proposal.

The aim of this document is to set out a strategy for the regeneration of the square which obtains the best value from identified funding, includes proactive and collaborative engagement with the local Regency Square and wider Brighton and Hove community, and acts as a lever to generate and direct community capital and additional funding and sponsorship resources into the improvement of the square.

This document will be used as a working tool to gather stakeholder comments, and provide a basis for actions.

The Regency Square Community Partnership will agree the outline of details, commission improvements as well as oversee and scrutinise the implementation of the strategy – a collaborative forum which brings together community, resident and commercial stakeholders with council officers and other partners, and ensures that the community has a strong and decisive role in the regeneration of the square.



The case for improvement

Regency Square is an important part of Brighton and Hove city heritage. It is the largest and grandest of the seafront squares of the 1820s phase of development to the west of Brighton and most of the houses are Grade II* listed.



Today the appearance of the Square is marred by a variety of ugly above ground structures linked to the underground car park: poor quality, crumbling hard landscaping and time-expired planting. The car park beneath the whole of Regency Square has created a roof garden which limits planting options, creates drainage problems and increases stress on the grassed areas.



When the car park was being planned, the Regency Society submitted images and outline plans showing how the gardens could look post-car park, as shown above. Unfortunately these plans were never realised, and the subsequent layout has failed to do justice to the grand setting or to provide an attractive and engaging public space.

The Square provides a much needed outside space for local residents, most of whom do not have private gardens. It is held in affection by locals, some of whom help to maintain it, and is also used by city visitors – in increased numbers since the opening of the BA i360. However, the current layout, which lacks legibility and offers poor access into and around the gardens, coupled with paving and other features which are poorly presented and in need of renewal, offers challenges to positive use and exacerbates low-level anti-social behaviour such as street drinking, rough sleeping, littering and dog fouling.

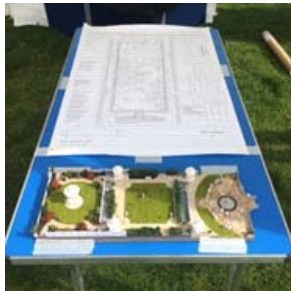
Recognising the need to improve the Regency Square area, the Council commissioned a report, which set out a plan to restore the period character. Lack of funds prevented this going ahead. The BA i360 Section 106 funding now provides the opportunity to address these problems and to create square that is fit for purpose, fulfilling expectations and serving the needs of all.



The case for improvement

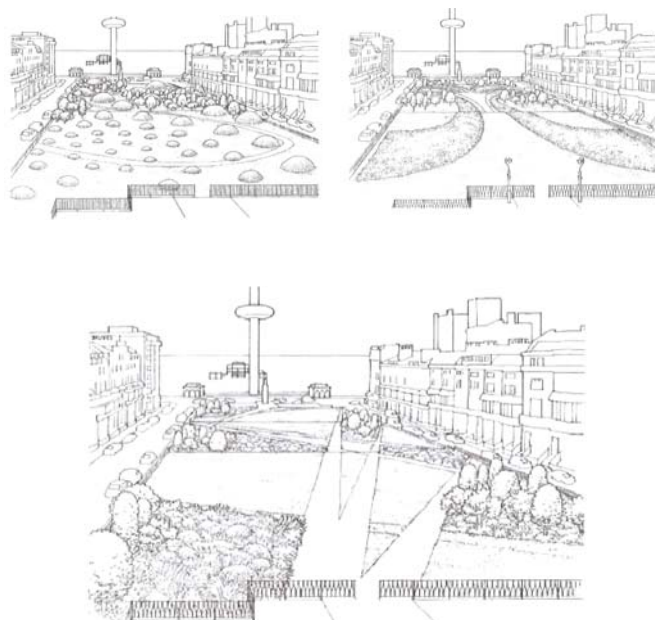
As the construction of the BA i360 commenced, council officers, the Regency Square Area Society and other local stakeholders began discussing the way forward – how to get the most for the city from this unique opportunity, and in early 2016 this formalised into the Regency Square Community Stakeholder Group.

This group consisted of representatives from the Regency Square Area Society, the BA i360 and The West Pier Trust with support from the council Communities Team. This regeneration strategy comes as a result of the work of this group.



In the summer of 2016 The Regency Square Area Society surveyed all households and businesses in the Regency Square area to find out what people want from the Regency Square outside space and how they want it to look. The paper survey was supplemented by an exhibition and consultation event in the Square over the course of a weekend.

Additionally, nationally famous garden designer Diarmuid Gavin, created three possible design themes for Regency Square and these were also considered within the consultation.



This was a successful process which gained substantial community input and insight, and the information provided offers firm and contemporary evidence to support the basis for the recommendations contained within this proposal. To find out more about the consultation process, see Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the pdf respectively.

Collaborative approaches

Brighton & Hove City Council, in common with other local authorities, is having to find new ways of managing and delivering services on a much reduced budget. Part of the council response is to identify ways that it can work with community and other partners to develop a more collaborative approach, which empowers residents and engages them to a greater degree in all aspects of city management. In particular, the council corporate plan identifies the following aspects:

Public accountability: Strengthening partnership delivery arrangements and building collaborative, trustful and empowering relationships between council and citizens

Citizen focussed: Building more collaborative relationships between the council and citizens, designing, producing and delivering services together with them.

Active Citizenship: Engaging residents and businesses in council and partnership decision making. Moving beyond council engagement as a transactional approach to more collaborative and empowering relationships with our diverse communities. Develop genuinely engaging and collaborative approaches with citizens for all service design and delivery.

These considerations have informed the approach we are developing for the regeneration of Regency Square, and the Regency Square Community Partnership will oversee a model of joint guardianship with the local community. Future plans for the Square must include defining roles and responsibilities of all parties.

Views of key stakeholders

As well as the formal consultation, a range of other stakeholders have been contacted for their views:

The Regency Square area community

Local people see the space as their front garden and want a well designed, well maintained, attractive, open green space in which to relax and spend some of their leisure time. Many residents have a strong interest in the heritage aspects of the Square. Local businesses, mainly hotels, restaurants and shops, want a garden which attracts potential customers.

Brighton and Hove City Council

Several council departments have a stake in this project. Overall the council wants a garden which contributes to the "offer" of Brighton and Hove as a visitor destination as well as serving the needs of residents. How the garden fits in with the surrounding environment is important. Practical issues which concern the council include the maintenance of the garden with available funds and having a space which works logistically in terms of footfall, parking, health and safety etc. The council also has an interest in preserving the heritage of Regency Square.

BA i360

The BA i360 want to see a good return for their Section 106 investment in terms of benefit, on an ongoing basis, for visitors to the attraction, the local community and the city. Such benefits include raising awareness of the seashore environment as well as providing an attractive space in which to spend time.

Others

The hopes and expectations of other stakeholders such as the West Pier Trust, and the West Pier area seafront traders have yet to be articulated. Local heritage societies such as the Regency Society, the Brighton Society and others who act as guardians of the city's heritage will also have an interest in the regeneration of the Square. These groups are included within the strategy and we hope that they will play a part in this regeneration programme.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives identified below have been developed from the range of sources and resources mentioned above. They offer a broad indication of the direction of travel which the regeneration process will take. They will inform the development of the masterplan and will be subject to further investigation. Once the masterplan has been agreed there will be further opportunities to help develop and to comment on detailed design proposals at all stages of the regeneration process.

1 To create a new garden design which fulfils the hopes and expectations of stakeholders

- By taking into consideration the views of local people as expressed in the RSAS consultation.
- By incorporating elements which acknowledge the seashore location of the garden.
- By identifying what the meaning of a 'Regency period' Square is in today's context
- By acknowledging the role of the square in the wider Regency area context.
- By making a virtue of the distinctive, roof garden nature of the space.
- By investigating the potential for additional soil to be added which would increase planting possibilities
- By incorporating cultural and educational elements such as the aquatic interpretation boards required by the Section 106 agreements.
- By creating a garden which works logistically in terms of people moving through it and around it.
- By incorporating features which encourage responsible behaviour and discourage anti social behaviour
- By consideration of the relationship of this garden to neighbouring squares, i.e. Russell and Clarence Squares to the north, as well as the other seafront squares to the west.

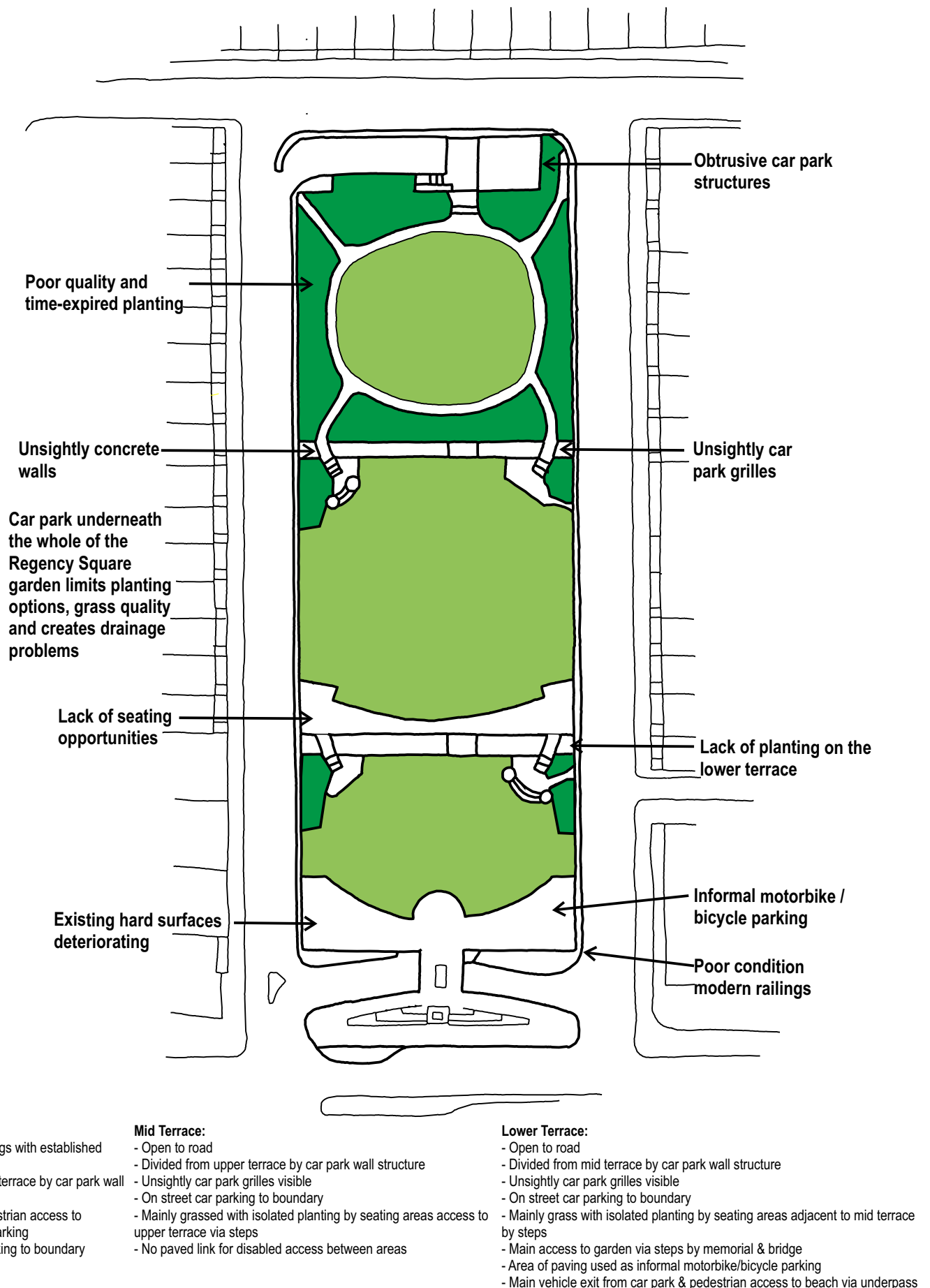
2 To restore the period character of the Regency Square outside space

- By replacing the current 1960s railings which surround parts of the Square with period style railings
- By replacing the current street lamps with period style street lamps
- By replacing the current pavement which surrounds the garden with Chailey brick paving

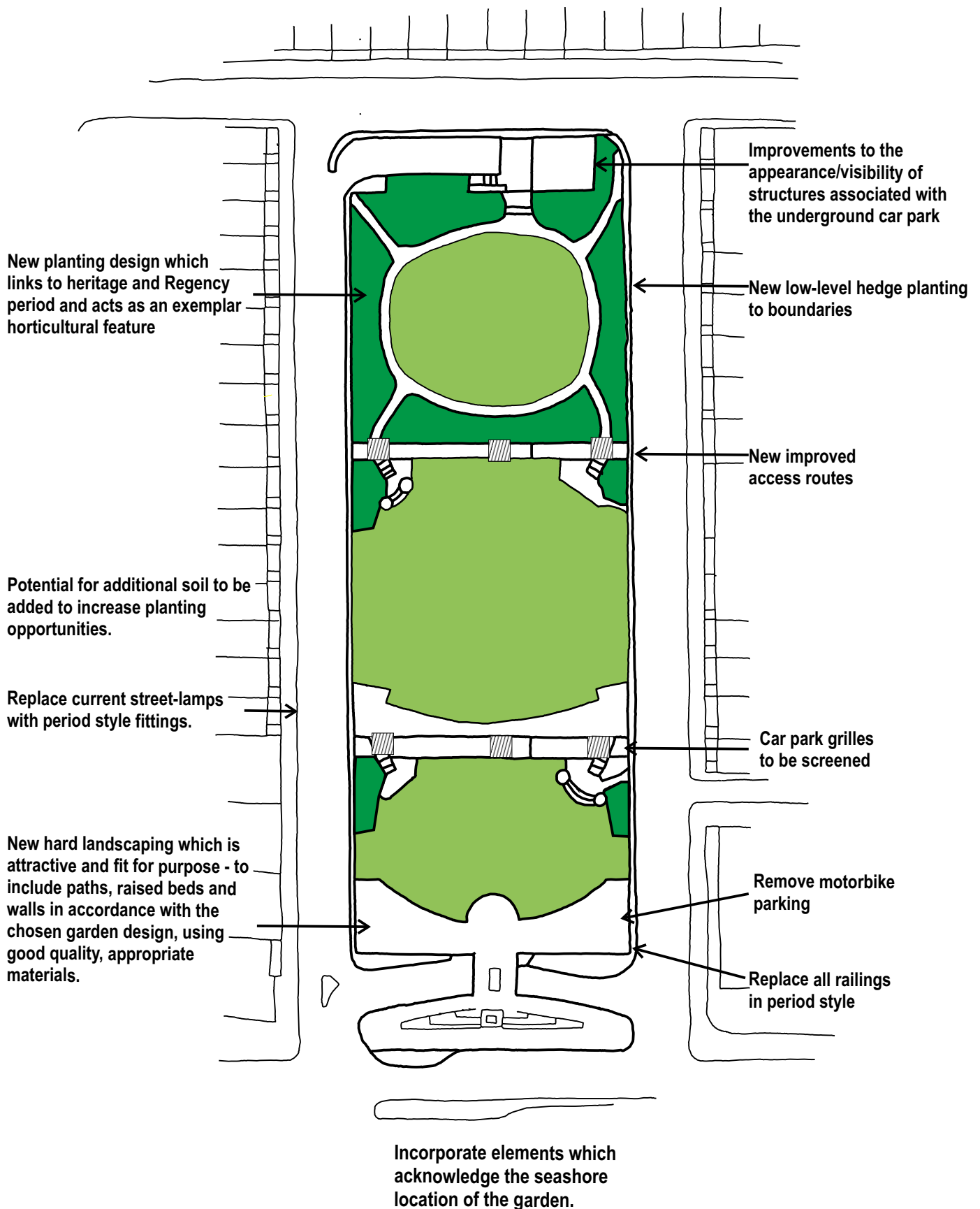
3 To create hard landscaping which is attractive and fit for purpose

- By removing the present hard landscaping, including any structures associated with the underground car park, which can be removed.
- By hiding or making more attractive the above ground structures associated with the underground car park which cannot be removed.
- By building new paths, raised beds, walls etc. in accordance with the chosen layout, using good quality, appropriate materials.

Regency Square: Constraints and issues



Regency Square: Improvement options from consultation



Regeneration Strategy: Developing a Masterplan

The BA i360 ticket revenue fund will come on stream in 2018 and will support the regeneration, management and maintenance of the Regency Square outside space for as long as the BA i360 continues to operate. Providing a sum of around £30,000 annually, this gives the opportunity to plan into the future, investing in the renewal of the Regency Square over a substantial period of time. Because of the level of certainty afforded by this sum, the council has agreed in principle to forward fund elements of the regeneration programme so that several years income may be combined in advance to achieve substantial works. Additionally, this means that the Regency Square Community Partnership will be in a strong position to lever in additional funding or sponsorship investment to support aspects of the masterplan which fall outside of the scope of the ticket revenue fund.

To date, the council has agreed to provide forward funding to cover the initial costs of developing a masterplan, and the tasks which will be associated with this are described below.

A: Understanding Regency Square

All available information about the existing situation will need to be collated. This should include, where possible the following tasks:

- Obtain details of the car park construction, including structural, drainage, cover of soils
- Obtain details of underground service runs (water supply, foul water, surface water, electric, gas, comms.)
- Identify any areas with drainage issues and possible reasons for occurrence
- Obtain Information about current BHCC landscape maintenance regime
- Collate details of all policy, designations, legal status etc. relating to Regency Square
- Collate details of elements of square with associated time periods; to assist in full identification / cataloguing of important historical features
- Review wider 'Regency City' context; collate details of other Regency period connections, areas or features in the wider area
- Review of Brighton and Hove's current publicity / interpretation of Regency features
- Obtain CBA report by Dominic Watkins
- Review BHCC historical / urban character assessments
- Collate information on current uses of the square

Obtain additional surveys as required:

- Topographical survey with detailed levels and elevations
- Condition survey of all structures
- Condition survey of all underground car park related structures (this may require specialist advice from an engineer)

B: Stakeholder engagement

Identify all possible stakeholders and provide them with this strategy, with period for response. This list should not be regarded as exhaustive, but should include the following:

- RSAS members
- Residents / Businesses
- The British Airways i360
- The West Pier Trust
- Preston Street Traders
- The Regency Society
- The Brighton Society
- Hove Civic Society
- West Hill Community Association
- East Brunswick Residents' Association
- Brunswick Town Association
- Montpelier and Clifton Hill Association
- Brighton and Hove Heritage Commission
- Regency Ward Local Councillors
- BHCC Communities Projects Team
- BHCC Conservation Officer
- BHCC planning and Major Projects team
- BHCC Highways
- BHCC Street Lighting
- BHCC Car Park Management
- BHCC Seafront Manager
- BHCC Biosphere Officer
- BHCC Open Spaces Manager (Development)
- BHCC Open Spaces Manager (Management)
- BHCC Rough sleepers team and St Mungo's Broadway

After a set period, collate any responses, review and update brief if required.

Identify any links with other groups, e.g. other Regency squares, historical societies, local groups; review of activities to see if any good ideas are transferrable to Regency Square.

C: Funding and revenue sources

i360 Ticket Revenue Fund

Work with BHCC Planning, Major Projects and other relevant departments to agree a financing schedule drawing on the BA i360 ticket revenue fund, which will form the main income stream to drive forward the regeneration programme. It is anticipated that the masterplan will require a financing schedule which will include initial capital expenditure focussed on layout, hard landscaping and infrastructure, planting, furniture, fixtures and lighting, which will need to be forward funded by the council and set against predicted income. It will also include support for an annual maintenance and upkeep programme, and for public arts/interpretation and community involvement.

Heritage Lottery Fund

Hold initial scoping discussion with the Heritage Lottery Fund. Some aspects of the works identified are particularly concerned with restoring heritage features – for example Regency railings or Chailey paving – and these aspects may be dependent upon additional funding.

Other funding sources

Research and identify any other possible sources of funding for design work, capital works, management and maintenance works and/or publicity with assistance from BHCC officers. Collate information about each to include: potential sum available, conditions and requirements attached, level of public consultation if required, method of application and time periods (one-off or longer term).

Identify any alternative revenue sources such as local groups, RSAS fund raising activities and events; commercial concessions (e.g. ice cream van). Research any sponsorship opportunities.

D: Masterplan

Production of a diagrammatic overview of vision and identified improvements and how these are manifested on the ground, along with identification of any other opportunities for approval by all stakeholders. Consideration should be given to the following in the masterplanning process:

- Restoration as appropriate to reflect former appearance, heritage and Regency period (layout, furniture, fixtures, lighting); links to wider Regency area
- Seafront location (in climatic and aspect terms)
- Links to West Pier / i360 (movements and views)
- Use as a garden by residents
- Uniqueness and complexities of roof garden nature
- Movement of pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles
- Access into and around the gardens for people with disabilities/additional access requirements.
- Overcoming / working with the terraced nature of the square
- Improvements to hard landscape with introduction of good quality and long lasting materials
- Improvements to appearance /visibility of structures associated with underground car park
- Opportunities for pedestrian links to upper and lower esplanade (road crossings, subway)

Further to approval of diagrammatic masterplan, production of detailed masterplan.

Identification of full costings (this may require specialist advice from a quantity surveyor and possible prioritisation / phasing of work.

E: Planting

The opportunity has been identified for a new garden design. Consideration should be given to the following in the planting design process:

- Links to heritage and Regency period
- Seafront location (in climatic and aspect terms)
- Opportunity for an exemplar horticultural feature
- Soil enhancement requirements
- Maintenance requirements including method of watering
- Biodiversity

Production of sketch scheme with plant palette along with provision of budget costing for implementation and likely ongoing budget for maintenance regime; subject to approval production of fully quantified planting scheme.

F: Interpretation

Interpretation of the Regency area context, contribution of Regency Square to this and meaning in today's context.

Interpretation of the aquatic environment is required as part of the BA i360 S106 agreement. This is identified to be located in Regency Square.

Proposals should be produced in tandem with BHCC to ensure coordination with the wider Brighton and Hove interpretation approach. Proposals should incorporate simple visual information in both text and pictorial form, with links to more in-depth online information.

Opportunities for other interpretation should be identified; these could include links with the Biosphere project and urban sustainability; the 'Sundial' proposals (by John Kapp); local walking route leaflets including routes from public transport hubs and car parks; links to wider 'Regency City' interpretation; signage in local add wider area; comparison and links with other (publicly accessible) roof gardens in Brighton; links to 'The Regency Route' bus service (no. 29 Brighton - Lewes - Uckfield - Crowborough - Tunbridge Wells) and the i7 bus service in summer months.

G: Publicity

Identify opportunities for increased publicity opportunities in print, online, word of mouth and through events. These should be tailored to different ages / groups.

Regular website updates / blogs; identification of any associated website management costs.

Events could take the form of regular art, sculpture and temporary pavilion competitions (along the lines of the Serpentine Gallery and the '4th plinth' in Trafalgar square), outdoor learning opportunities; drawing classes; outdoor exercise for all and gardening clubs (links to BHCC and NHS health and wellbeing initiative, outdoor classroom with links to local schools).

H: Links to BA i360

Set up discussions with BA i360 management to understand visitor movements, coach drop off arrangements, road crossing points, subway link and how Regency Square can feed into the visitor attraction offer (picnic venue, photo opportunities from top of square etc). Feed into masterplanning and interpretation offers.

I: Implication of Proposals

Identify any approvals required and apply (conservation area / planning permission) within correct time periods.

Notification to all stakeholders, residents and businesses of intention to carry out any works.

J: Immediate Proposals

Production of detailed designs suitable for tender and construction. Identification of other legislative requirements as necessary to carry out work such as CDM, project management, quantity surveyor licences etc.

If work is required to be carried out by contractors, identify methods of tendering, procurement process and method of awarding contracts to carry out work.

If appropriate, identify likely volunteer groups and resources, tools and management required.

K: Longer Term Proposals

Set out timeline of proposals and actions, including income / outgoings, with regular review to ensure useable tool going forwards.

Prepare model for joint guardianship between BHCC, local community and other groups which should:

- Define roles and responsibilities for all parties
- Outline the aims and methods of achievement
- Identify resources required
- Set out method of regular review

Preparation of Management and Maintenance Plan identifying aims and setting out schedule of regular work on a month-by-month basis, such as mowing, weeding and litter picking, as well as less regular activities, such as shrub pruning, plant renewal and railing painting.

L: Regency Square Community Partnership

Work with the key stakeholders which make up the Regency Square Partnership - The Regency Square Area Society, the BA i360, The West Pier Trust, Brighton & Hove City Council – to develop and implement a partnership agreement which includes the following aspects:

- Governance arrangements which provide for a positive and collaborative working model which ensures that the Regency Square community are fully able to influence and control the regeneration process at the highest level possible.
- Description of and allocation of responsibilities around delivering the regeneration programme, including fundraising, procurement, commissioning and monitoring works
- A partnership funding agreement which details arrangements around allocating resources from the ticket revenue fund, monitoring arrangements and additional fundraising.
- Community input into the upkeep, maintenance and ongoing development of Regency Square over the lifetime of the regeneration project.
- Other aspects as appropriate

Regeneration Strategy for Regency Square

Having considered the proposed strategy for the regeneration of Regency Square, please use the space below to let us know any thoughts which you have. If you would like to be included on our emailing list to receive further updates on this initiative, please leave your contact details below.

If you have a completed form to submit or have any further enquiries about the Regency Square Regeneration project, email Simon Bannister at simon.bannister@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Your view...

**Appendices (available in full pdf version found on
Regency Square Area Society website: www.regencybrighton.com)**

1. Questionnaire distributed by the Regency Square Area Society in February 2016 to 1100 households and businesses in the Regency Square area.
2. Analysis of the above questionnaire. Carried out by Nicola and David Floyd for the Regency Square Area Society
3. Ideas from the April 2016 consultative weekend.
4. The significance of Regency Square historically and as a local amenity

APPENDIX 1

Regency Square Garden Regeneration Survey results

The survey process

The survey was designed by members of the RSAS committee, taking into account what we understood to be important issues to various members of the community, in order to test the level of support for these issues more widely.

Over the course of February 2016 printed copies of the survey were hand delivered to over 1100 households and businesses in the Regency Square area by the RSAS committee members. The survey was also emailed to all RSAS members and was also available to download on the RSAS website and Facebook page. Designs were also featured in the Argus with contact details and information on how to respond to the survey.¹

We achieved a 7% return rate on the survey (slightly higher than commercial surveys absent financial incentives, no doubt reflecting the importance of this issue to local people).²

The process for analysing responses

Results were analysed in line with MRS guidelines for mixed qual and quant surveys ie inferences were drawn for quantitative purposes only when clearly established by qualitative comments. Comments and views were then collated to quantify the breadth and depth of respondents' views on each issue.

Where multiple respondents made similar comments/suggestions, these were grouped by theme for quantification. Single respondent issues were omitted.

We can examine the data by sub-samples (ie those that live only in Regency Square³, those that support period railings) and assess how sub-samples vary from the overall responses. Cross breaks can be produced as required ie we can examine the views of those who live only on Regency Square and support period railings.

NB: While the data has been spot audited, it has not yet been fully audited. As such these findings should be treated as comprehensive but still subject to minor variance at the margin.

Location of respondents

We had a wide sample from across the local area, with responses from every area RSAS represents. The majority of responses, unsurprisingly, came from residents and businesses on Regency Square itself.

¹ Comments on the Argus article have not been incorporated into the data, though they suggest similar views to that produced by actual questionnaire responses.

² In statistical terms this equates to a 95% confidence interval (ie the probability that the sample accurately represents the views of the local population is 95%, which is the industry standard) with a margin of error of just 11% (ie the range of deviation of responses is likely to be no more than 11%). This means we can be 95% confident that if our survey of the local population was repeated 100 times, 95 out of 100 times the same results would be produced, with a deviation of no more than 11%. Therefore we can be statistically confident that our survey results are a reasonable representation of the local area's views.

³ Certain sub-sample are likely to be too small to be statistically analysed robustly relative to the total sample, but can still be examined indicatively.

	No. Respondents	Response %
Regency Square	39	54%
Sussex heights	15	21%
Kings Road	5	7%
Castle + Stone St	4	6%
Russell Square	2	3%
Queensbury Mews	2	3%
Cavendish Hse	1	1%
Metropole Court	1	1%
Preston Street	1	1%
Clarence Square	1	1%
Not provided	1	1%
	72	100%

Summary of responses: Importance of the gardens

It is clear that the gardens are very important to a great number of people, with many respondents referring to them as 'their garden'. One response which captures this sentiment suggests that they are 'the verdant centre of our community'. There is also widespread support for improvement of the gardens: even those who advocate no or minimal changes want to see the existing garden structure tidied up, more planting and greater maintenance.

Some respondents' views on what the Regency Square garden means to them:

Everything!! It is the view out of my window and a huge reason for living in the square.

It is one major reason we bought our flat in Regency Square. The gardens are an essential part of the square, its environment and its community.

It is a breathing space from the fast pace and fun of the seafront/shops

The top part is a lovely peaceful area to sit and read a book in summer and watch life – people, birds, goings-on, and be outside – it means a lot.

It is an iconic area of Brighton and it needs redesigning

A lovely space to sit, walk, relax and enjoy a chat with locals and visitors

It is my garden – I don't have any outdoor space.

A green space in the middle of a city must be preserved. Habitat for birds/butterflies.

Some restful green in an urban area

Contemplative, re-charge and be mindful. Somewhere to sit (quietly) and take in the sea air and sun.

Lovely green space outside my workspace for staff and customers to enjoy.

Living in Sussex Heights it is the closest we will get to having a garden

It is a small piece of green within the cream concrete that offers peace.

Historical legacy of Brighton – actually the area is one of the most historically important parts of Brighton and as such is completely iconic

It is my main green space, so is very important as somewhere to relax.

A vitally important green space where people can relax and enjoy the garden and the wildlife, especially the birds. A place where neighbours can meet and talk.

Summary of responses: Garden Design

Views on the Diarmuid Gavin garden designs

These designs provided a very helpful focus point for respondents, clarifying specifically what respondents did/did not want to see in terms of design, and sparking ideas as to alternative approaches to the garden design (discussed below). While a high proportion (47%) of respondents ultimately rejected one or more of the designs (generally in favour of a simpler design aesthetic – see further below), it is clear respondents found it very helpful to have these designs as a catalyst for considering the issue.

Respondents were expressly asked to rank the designs, and 79% of respondents provided some form of ranking (many provided rankings even when suggesting alternatives and/or rejecting all three designs).

Of the three designs, Plumage was by far the most popular:

- It was the design most often ranked (by 53 respondents, or 74% of the total sample). Bumps followed (45, 63%), then Searchlight (43, 60%)
- It achieved the most first place rankings (25, 44% of those who ranked the designs or 35% of total respondents), followed by Searchlight (18, 32%), then Bumps (14, 25%)
- It was the design least likely to be rejected by respondents: 23 respondents (or 32%) rejected this design. This compares to Searchlight and Bumps which were rejected by almost half of respondents (47%)
- In terms of the best overall weighted average of rankings (ie factoring in the number of 1s, 2s, and 3s each design scored) across those who ranked the designs, Plumage and Searchlight tied at 1.74 (where 1 was the best score, and 3 the worst). Bumps achieved 2.22.

Searchlight			Plumage			Bumps		
No. 1s	No. 2s	No. 3s	No. 1s	No. 2s	No. 3s	No. 1s	No. 2s	No. 3s
18	18	7	25	17	11	14	7	24
32%	43%	17%	44%	40%	26%	25%	17%	57%
Qual support	Qual Reject	Reject	Qual support	Qual Reject	Reject	Qual support	Qual Reject	Reject
1	4	30	4	3	20	1	4	30
Total rankings			Total rankings			Total rankings		
Average ranking		1.74	Average ranking		1.74	Average ranking		2.22
Total % reject		47%	Total % reject		32%	Total % reject		47%

Alternative proposals for garden design

Overwhelmingly, the views of those putting forward alternative views on the design of the gardens was that there should be improvements made rather than wholesale changes (29%), with many calling for the planting and care of the upper garden to be extended to the lower garden and a general tidy up/improved maintenance of the existing gardens. Palmeira and Brunswick Squares were both cited as inspiration (10%).

A selection of respondents' views on these issues:

If I'm honest I don't particularly like any of the garden designs... Actually the gardens look much better in their current state

Nothing as drastic as the options now being given to us. Just keep the grass maintained, a few more shrubs, perhaps benches in the middle section.

We are strongly opposed to any gimmicky playing around with the essential character of the Square.

No major changes (unnecessary)

I don't want the garden to change too much

The gardens should look essentially the same, but with much more attractive street furniture (railings etc)

It should be well maintained, it should be landscaped like the top section of the garden

I think the top part should stay as it is and improvements only made to the bottom part to 'pretty' it up.

I would like to see as much effort made on the lower gardens as the upper gardens

More like Palmeira Square, with a garden with definition, landscaped and pretty.

Be as close as possible to Brunswick Square – in my view the best in Brighton.

I would prefer something like Brunswick Square to any of the designs proposed

Another key issue raised was the complexity and cost of the maintenance associated with the DG designs. 40% of respondents emphasised that they wanted to see a simple garden design that was easy to maintain and that their priority is to have well-tended gardens that are kept tidy rather than necessarily a garden that is 'designed'.

A selection of respondents' views on these issues:

I don't want to choose one of the three designs for the following reason. To my mind the top priority is one of care and low maintenance costs. I don't know which of the designs, or something else, is likely to offer that.

I worry the new designs are not realistic, they will be hard to maintain and they are not practical for the current users of the garden.

I particularly worry about the longevity or guarantee of maintenance and what the garden would look like if it were to be abandoned in a year or two.

I do not think any of the proposed designs should be adopted – they are unnecessarily complex and I worry about maintenance.

I would like to see very few changes indeed, but the gardens need to be maintained better

As now, but tidier... general tidy up, better maintenance, more plants in the lower two gardens. Nothing fancy like the proposed designs.

I'd like it to be well maintained at all times, grass cut, flower beds tended

It should be tidy and green

Keep it simple, elegant and easy to maintain.

The gardens should be tidied, but for the benefit of residents not a 'view' from the i360.

Well cared for and no litter

Immaculately kept, practical.

Calm, green, clean, well-tended.

Cleaner, neater, more planting

Tidy it up, keep it clean

Respondents generally want to see more planting (trees, shrubs, flowering plants) throughout the gardens (43%), particularly the lower gardens, and 10% of respondents expressly raised the need for better camouflaging of the carpark.

A selection of respondents' views on these issues:

It needs big shrubs to divide the garden into sections and provide windbreaks

A nicer, tidier garden with more planting in the lower garden

I would like to have interesting seashore plants and planting that would encourage wild life.

The lower garden – more vegetation, shrubs and low trees

Trees if possible, more shrubs, some flowers of course.

I would like more shrubs, trees and all grassed

Well cared for with many more colourful flowers and shrubs. Some low growing trees in large pots would be nice

More features, flowers and generally a more tidy and well-kept appearance.

More trees and plants, less concrete

The grill over the car park could be improved/camouflaged/made more attractive

Neat and tidy all year round, hiding the car park as much as possible

Finally, while 7% would like to see a contemporary garden design, 19% believe it is important that the garden reflects the heritage of the square and is designed around a traditional/Regency style to reflect this.

A selection of respondents' views on these issues:

It should look like a Regency garden so as to be in time with the architecture of the buildings.

I strongly feel that the gardens should complement the architecture of Regency Square and not distract attention away from it.

Traditional look with a modern twist to fit with Regency buildings tradition and i360s modern look

Traditional, in keeping with the square

A beautiful garden appropriate to the original design of the area

More impressive and of the period like the other squares

A modern twist on traditional

Contemporary, more structure, clean

	Improvements to existing structure, no major change	Well tended and easy to maintain	More/better planting (esp lower gardens)	Camouflage the carpark	Like Brunswick/ Palmeira Squares	Traditonal Regency garden	modern/ contemporary
No. Respondents	21	29	31	7	7	14	5
% Respondents	29%	40%	43%	10%	10%	19%	7%

Summary of responses: Specific features and garden usage

Features/usage as specified by the gre

The questionnaire set out a list of specific design features and possible activities/usage in the gardens and asked respondents views on each item. However, there was some confusion amongst respondents as to how to respond to this question as it was unclear whether not ticking an item indicated rejection or merely neutral views. In collating responses, in order to err on the side of caution, we have assumed not ticking an item equates to a 'neutral' view, but the data must be read with an assumption that at least some portion of the views recorded as neutral were, in fact, meant to indicate rejection. Those respondents that indicated Y/N in response to the question were recorded as such.

There was a very high degree of support for period railings (59%), period street lamps (63%) and Chailey brick pavement (60%), with significantly more than half of respondents supporting these changes. Qualified support primarily related to cost: respondents were supportive, but only if these changes did not cost too much to implement. Others raised concerns that adding railings should not lead to dogs being excluded (as seen with other gardens that are fully railed).

		Does not support	Qualified No	Neutral	Qualified support	Support
Period Railings	No. Respondents	11	1	18	2	40
	% Respondents	15%	1%	25%	3%	56%
Period Street lamps	No. Respondents	10	0	17	4	41
	% Respondents	14%	0%	24%	6%	57%
Chailey brick pavement	No. Respondents	7	1	21	5	38
	% Respondents	10%	1%	29%	7%	53%

In terms of usage, there were mixed responses to the various proposals:

- There has a high degree of support for having a **picnic area** (47%), though many stressed that this was more a green grassy space to put down a blanket for an informal picnic, rather than actual picnic tables and chairs (for which there was minimal support).
- There was a high degree of support for **art and sculpture exhibitions** (47%), correlated with many respondents' views that the gardens should be somewhere to be able to sit and relax (see further in next section).
- There was a very high degree of support for continuing to allow **dogs** on the lower gardens, with over half of respondents supporting this activity (57%). Many dog owners highlighted that they are active users of the gardens, taking their dogs there several times a day for walks. Qualified support primarily related to the need to maintain a separate space where dogs were not permitted (eg the upper gardens), and more bins etc to allow owners to pick up after their dogs.
- There was more limited support for **education projects with local schools** (29%), particularly when the high level of 'neutral' respondents contains at least some portion of non-supporters. Some residents highlighted the potential noise issues.
- There was more limited support for ensuring the gardens are linked into the **biosphere/showing biodiversity** (28%), particularly when the high level of 'neutral' respondents contains at least some portion of non-supporters.
- There was a high degree of support for **theatre and festival performances** (43%), though a quarter of supportive responses were qualified, raising concerns that the gardens should not be left in a state of disrepair after performances (references were made to the impact on the gardens of the Roundhouse theatre last year where the grass was damaged for many months afterwards).

		Does not support	Qualified No	Neutral	Qualified support	Support
Picnic Area	No. Respondents	12	3	23	2	32
	% Respondents	17%	4%	32%	3%	44%
Exhibitions: art/sculpture	No. Respondents	12	2	24	5	29
	% Respondents	17%	3%	33%	7%	40%
Dogs/Dog walking	No. Respondents	13	1	17	9	32
	% Respondents	18%	1%	24%	13%	44%
Education projects w/ schools	No. Respondents	9	0	42	2	19
	% Respondents	13%	0%	58%	3%	26%
Biosphere	No. Respondents	13	0	39	2	18
	% Respondents	18%	0%	54%	3%	25%
Theatre/festival performance	No. Respondents	12	0	29	8	23
	% Respondents	17%	0%	40%	11%	32%

Finally, as regards the last question ("*None of these – the gardens should be a peaceful area*"), it appears to have created confusion for respondents. For many people an important priority is that the gardens should be in general be maintained as a peaceful area, but they don't see that as incompatible with certain types of activities eg dog walking, art exhibitions or the occasional theatre performance. Therefore, exact responses on the issue of the 'peacefulness' of the gardens have been captured in line with respondent's statements on this issue (see below), and exact figures for this question have not been calculated as they are unreliable and not robust.

Alternative views on garden usage

We have also sought to capture the views put forward in comments by respondents as to how they see the gardens being used. The overwhelming view put forward by 43% of respondents is that the gardens should

not become a hive of activity, but rather should be maintained as a peaceful relaxing place with almost no change to its current character and usage. This included rejection of commercial usage and advertising. In contrast only 8% suggested that space should be reserved for specific activities⁴ other than those expressly identified in the RSAS questionnaire, with only one respondent suggesting that the gardens could be used for commercial activities (in this case a small coffee kiosk).

A selection of respondents' views on these issues:

The gardens should be enjoyed as a peaceful area. A place to sit and contemplate and enjoy the view and passers-by. The i360 is a modern structure and should not detract from the Regency style of the area.

In general, I think the square should be relatively peaceful given the variety of other activities nearby in Brighton, but with enough interest to tempt people to walk through such as pretty gardens. There's a danger of trying to do too much with it – for example I don't think theatre performances were a good idea as they ruined the grass for a long time last year.

I would be against a lot of commercial activity. We are already surrounded by shops and restaurants.

I do NOT want 'activities' on the square – no commercialisation.

No commercial enterprises

It should remain a peaceful area. I really don't want it to become a bustling area

It should, like other green spaces along the seafront, provide a sense of peace, a quiet space to break up the frenzy of the seafront and the built up area.

I would like to use the garden to relax and admire flowers/greenery

A quiet place of quiet contemplation, meeting friends, possibly art/sculpture exhibits. Not a playground/public picnic area

Fantastic space of peace and tranquillity. Plus a space for all – children to play, dogs to run, people to enjoy

It should have a quiet area, a family area for picnics and colourful flowers

Sitting, watching artists/players/performers/artworks

No activities

I'd like it to be a peaceful area

A peaceful area to sit

Relaxation

Peaceful place to relax

It would be nice to see some events there like the Roundabout, use it for barbis

Not sure this would be a popular idea, but I would love a small coffee/tea stand where people can collect in the mornings or latte afternoons (such as during the Brighton festival)

⁴ Suggestions were: table tennis, children's play area, adult exercise, bbqs, or festivals

Underlining this, 39% of respondents want to ensure that the gardens are maintained as an open, green, multipurpose space for all parts of the community to use. A frequent concern raised with the DG designs is that they did not leave enough open grass space for people to just lie out and relax.

A selection of respondents' views on these issues:

I do not think you have provided a "keep it as it is" option in terms of garden design – this would be my vote please. I would be grateful for genuine improvements such as maintaining the existing grassland and shrubbery, but if virtually the whole garden is taken over by [DG designs], then what practical space would there be for regular dog walkers, Frisbee throwers, ball kickers and people who just want to sunbathe?

No exotic and unsustainable garden designs, picnic areas/tables or other restrictions to the amount of access people currently enjoy

All the proposed new designs would inhibit present usage – dog walking, kicking a football, kite flying, informal picnicking...

Primarily it should be a pleasant and attractively landscaped "space" to let as many people as possible enjoy it in the way they wish.

Make it all open and multipurpose

An open, all-purpose space as Brunswick Square is

I love the large grass area for dogs, people to play and to just relax on

It should be a nice simple green space for use by locals not a visitor 'attraction'

A free, open, visibly attractive space

Similarly, 18% of respondents emphasised that any redesign should focus on the community and community use, with a few expressly stating that the garden should not become a visitor attraction for the i360. As one respondent put it, the gardens need to work when in them not when looking at them.

A selection of respondents' views on these issues:

I really worry these "improvements" are not for the residents and they are more for the i360. It would be a shame if the garden became an attraction and was busy all the time, I still want to live in a peaceful area.

I would not wish it to change character, be more of an 'attraction' or part of the proposed attraction on the front or to change its unique characteristics...

Green space, not too fancy (don't really like the designs), community area

There was limited strength of feeling regarding the motorbikes on the square with only 4 respondents (6%) expressly raising it as an issue (and one respondent stating that an issue with the GD designs is that they failed to accommodate space for motorbikes!). Views on whether there should be ball space/no ball space was equally divided, again with limited respondents.

In addition to those who were supportive of ensuring the gardens are linked into the biosphere/showing biodiversity, 6% expressly raised the need to encourage wildlife into the gardens, and, in particular to maintain existing wildlife under any planned redesign.

	Open, green, multipurpose space	Primarily for community use	Peaceful and relaxing	Activity space	Encourage wildlife	Ban Motorbikes	Keep motorbikes	Ensure ball space	Ban ball usage
No. Respondents	28	13	31	6	4	4	1	4	5
% Respondents	39%	18%	43%	8%	6%	6%	1%	6%	7%

Additional amenities

Finally, respondents highlighted some additional amenities that they believed would improve the gardens (as set out above, amenities raised by single individuals have not been captured). These were more rubbish bins including bins for dog poo (11%); more paths across and around the gardens to make them easier to walk around (14%); more seating/benches that are better integrated into the overall garden design (19%); and finally 4% suggested nice lighting to showcase the garden with uplighters on plants and/or mood lighting.

	More Rubbish bins	More/better paths around gardens	More benches, integrated	Nice lighting
No. Respondents	8	10	14	3
% Respondents	11%	14%	19%	4%

Appendix 2
Questionnaire distributed in February 2016 to 1100 households and businesses in the Regency Square area.

The Regeneration of the Regency Square Garden

From 2017, Brighton and Hove City Council has allocated some of the money it will receive from the i360 ticket sales each year, to improving and maintaining Regency Square gardens. The Council has asked the Regency Square Area Society to consult with local residents and businesses and draw up some proposals for how this money should be spent.

This is a great opportunity to say what we want the garden to look like and how we want to use it. Please take a few minutes to give us your views, and return this form by **FEBRUARY 28**.

1. What does the Regency Square garden mean to you?

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2. How do you use the garden at present?

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3. What changes would you like to see in the garden?

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4. How would you like to use the garden?

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5. How do you think the garden should look?

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6. Attached are three possible garden designs which have been drawn up for the square by well-known professional garden designer Diarmuid Gavin. Please rate them in order of preference, 1 being the one you most like and 3 your least preferred.

Searchlight ... Plumage ... Bumps ...

7. Below are some ideas for improvements and activities. Please tick all those which you would support.

Replacing the current modern railings with period style railings
Replacing the current modern street lamps with period style street lamps (giving the same quality light)
Replacing the current pavement slabs with the original Chailey Brick pavement
Areas for picnics
Exhibitions of art or sculpture
Dog walking
Educational projects with local schools
The garden as part of the Biosphere (e.g. showing biodiversity or how beach plants grow in sandy areas)
Theatre or festival performances
None of these – the gardens should be a peaceful area

8. Your ideas for changes, improvements and activities.

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9. Please tell us about yourself (if you want to remain anonymous, that is ok too but we'd like to know what street/square you live on to make sure we represent the views of the whole area):

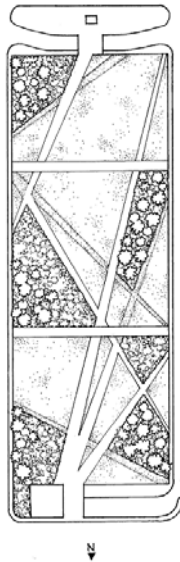
Name:
Address: (Street or Square).....
Email Address:
Telephone number:

Garden Design 1: Searchlight

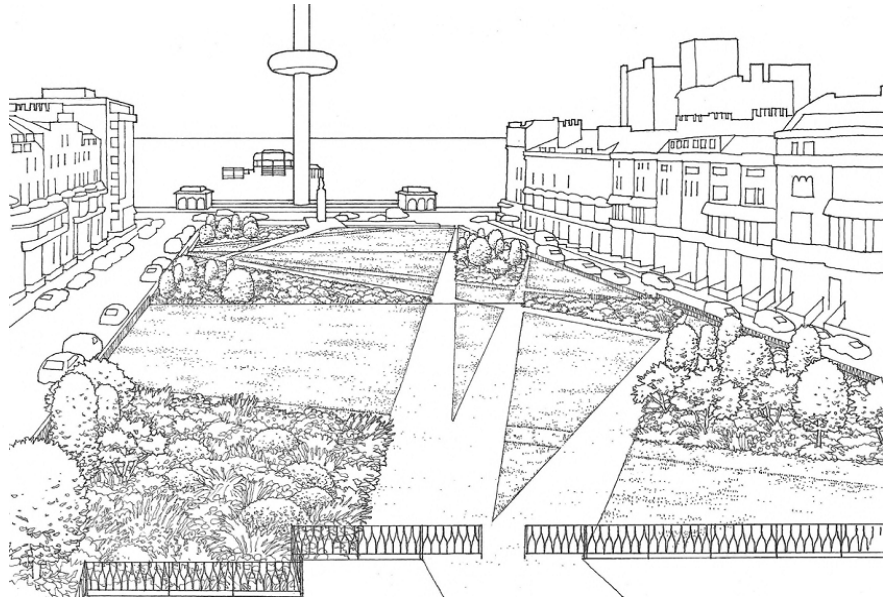
"The square was originally developed to allow views from the houses to the sea."

With this option I'm following the notion of sight lines and taking inspiration from other ideas, some quite contemporary. So, from the sundial type shadow to be generated by the i360 through wartime searchlights and coastal lighthouses, the crisscross lines of Hyde Park pathways to abstract art." – Diarmuid Gavin

Searchlight: Plan



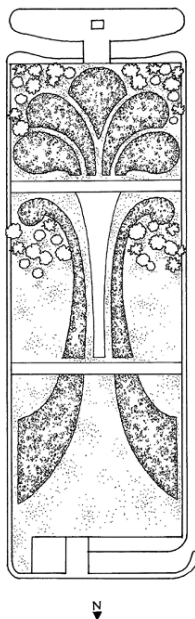
Searchlight: illustration



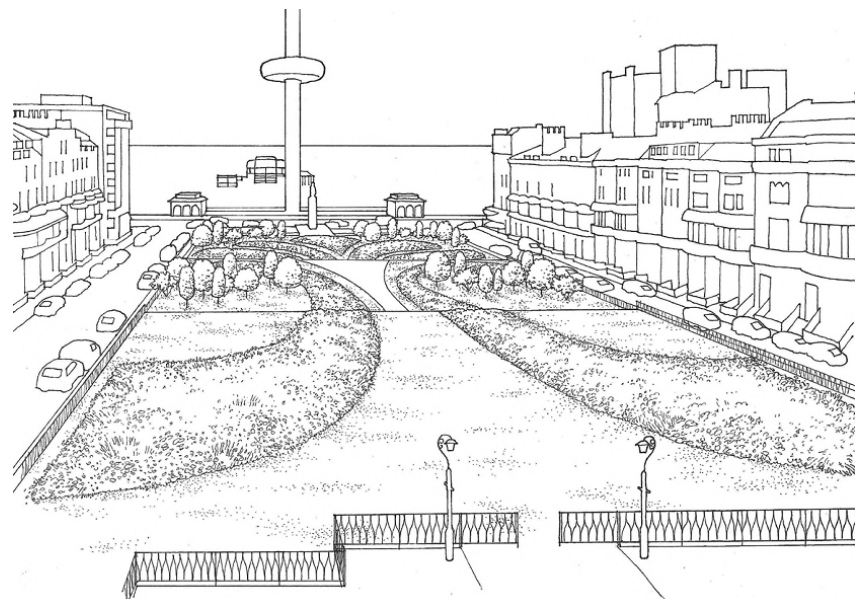
Garden Design 2: Plumage

"Seaside parks and gardens are famed for their use of flamboyant colour in exuberant flower beds. Considering that the gardens of Regency Square are often viewed from some elevation, whether presently in the surrounding townhouses or in the future through views from the i360 as it travels, I've embraced regal shapes to bathe the plot in seasonal colour." – Diarmuid Gavin

Plumage: Plan



Plumage: illustration



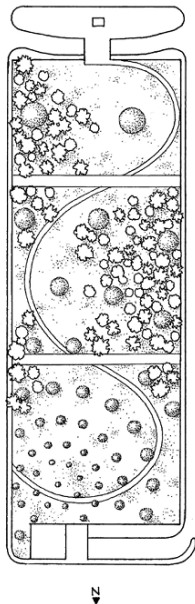
Garden Design 3: Bumps

"This notion is pure fun. It's a simple concept created by using sculptural forms to make an abstract pattern.

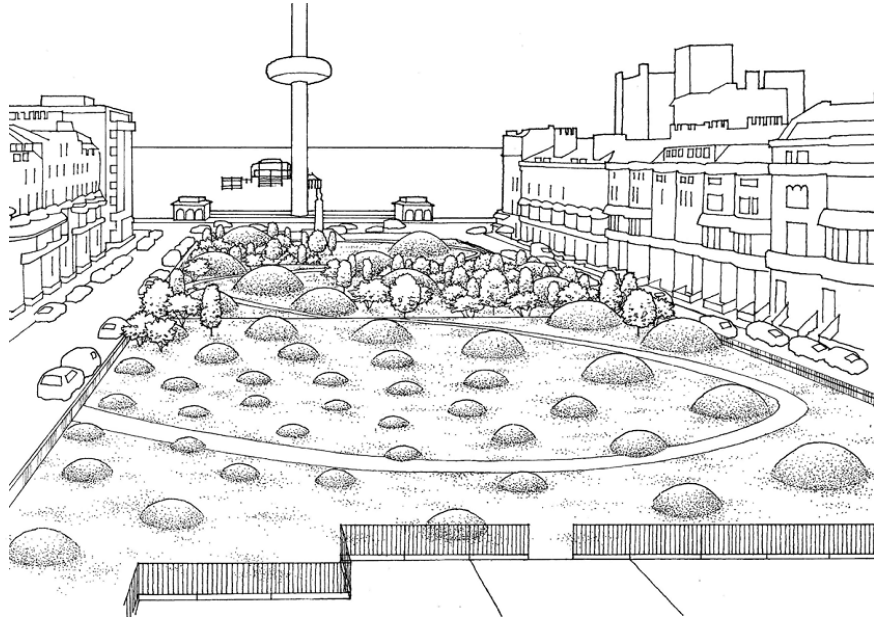
Grass mounds or bumps are set out in concentric rings, each increasing in volume the further they travel from the centre. This is imagined as a scheme to create subtle sculptural and humorous interest from homes on the square, for passers-by and certainly from the i360. People love mounds....to gather around, to roll down, to run around.....to conquer.

They are designed to make the most of the sloping site and will appear to be bigger from a distance. Because of their round form, like domed jelly moulds, they won't block views, rather, they should add to the increasingly playful vista." – Diarmuid Gavin

Bumps: Plan



Bumps: illustration



Please return your completed questionnaire to: Nigel Rose at 65/66 Regency Square, Brighton by FEBRUARY 28.

Alternatively, you can email your response to Nicola.Floyd@yahoo.com

If you would like to become a member of the Regency Square Area Society, and support the work that we do as well as receive our monthly newsletter covering everything that is going on in our local area, please contact our Treasurer Nicola Floyd at: Nicola.Floyd@yahoo.com or 07833 527270. Membership starts at just £5 for individuals and £8 for local businesses.

Appendix 3

Ideas for garden design from the gazebo weekend April 23 and 24 2016 and subsequent discussions

Get rid of all existing hard landscaping

Use Chailey bricks for all paths and facings of walls etc.

Wherever there are railings they should be period style

Use glass panelling (similar to that used at Bedford Towers) across south end of top garden and for emergency exits

Glass panelling across the south end of the bottom garden

Period railings across the south end of the bottom garden

Glass panelling to replace railings on the bridge

Use the ventilation grid as the barrier between the top and middle garden. Just have period railings across the paths either side and a short way across grid. Railings could be of diminishing height rather than just stop short. This would avoid the need for anything going right across the garden

Two more benches in the top garden

Planter boxes along the south side of the middle garden to hide wall

Raise the soil level to the top of the car park wall at the north end of the middle garden and have a slope

Have steps descending from the level of the top of the car park wall at the north end of the middle garden (these could be straight or semi circular)

Areas of seashore planting on pebbles with paths around planted areas

Have some open bottomed raised tubs on the middle garden with small trees to deter adult football games

Conversation seats and/or circular seating on the lower garden

Hide wall with seating in the lower garden

Demolish bridge at south end of Regency Square

A fountain in the centre of the lower garden

Hedging on east and west sides of middle and lower gardens, with gaps

Planter boxes along the south end of the bottom garden to deter motorbikes and bikes

Planter boxes either side of the paths leading between sections of the garden

APPENDIX 4

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REGENCY SQUARE HISTORICALLY AND AS A LOCAL AMENITY

Regency Square as part of the early 19th century development of Brighton and Hove

Regency and Georgian squares of tall, elegant houses surrounding a central garden, often with decorative iron railings, are one of the major defining features of Brighton and Hove. They are of huge importance, forming a major part of the city's early 19th century heritage and providing inspiration elsewhere. It was in Brighton that the style of English seaside architecture was invented. Hitherto not all the squares have been as valued and cherished as they deserve, but the time has now come for them to play their part in the current major strategic development of Brighton and Hove into a world class waterfront city. Green routes through the city, where people can imagine themselves back in the time of George IV and Jane Austen while looking at the architecture or just relaxing on the grass could be an inspirational aspect of the city's visitor experience. At the same time, these gardens are essential to the quality of life of all who live and work in the city.

The squares owe their distinctive nature to the development of Brighton as a fashionable resort. By 1750 Brighton was an established spa and sea bathing resort with lodging houses, assembly rooms, and walks. The Prince of Wales took up residence in 1780 and the Steine, with its proximity to the Pavilion, became the town's main promenade. The New Steine, laid out in 1790-95, was the first square open to the sea. Bedford Square was started in 1801, followed by Clarence Square (some time before 1810) and Russell Square in 1809. These squares are much smaller than later developments. The houses are built on a more modest scale and in plainer styles.

The Prince's Regency and subsequent succession to the crown was the apogee of exclusive Brighton. This post Napoleonic period was one of growing national confidence and many new building materials became available. The fashionable society that surrounded the monarch brought the wealth to the town that enabled a building boom of grand new developments in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. The architects associated with this era are Amon Wilds, his son Amon Henry Wilds and Charles Augustin Busby. Regency Square, built between 1818 and 1828 and attributed to Amon Wilds and his son, remains one of Brighton's finest and grandest seafront squares. Built on a much larger scale than the earlier developments, with a wealth of neo classical features, it is a typical development of Brighton at its height of exclusivity. The garden was only accessible to the fashionable people who owned or leased houses in the square and was large enough to promenade.

Regency Square is, however, surpassed in magnificence by Brunswick Town, developed in 1825 as Busby's great set piece. Brunswick Terrace with its two immense blocks of elegant palace fronted neo classical houses was described as 'The handsomest spot in Brighton' in Bruce's 1834 Brighton guide. The houses in Brunswick Square, which is flanked by Brunswick Terrace, were built for the most fashionable of owner occupiers and conform to the Georgian formula of 'First Class' houses, perfect for entertaining on a lavish scale. This period marks the beginning of the end of Brighton's royal patronage and exclusivity. After inheriting the crown, George IV concentrated on Windsor, and visited the Royal Pavilion for the last time in 1827. William IV enjoyed staying at the Royal Pavilion, but Queen Victoria abandoned it altogether after purchasing Osborne House on the Isle of Wight in 1845. The advent of the railway in 1841 marked the town's transition from Georgian exclusivity into a more popular resort. There was however, still a 'season' throughout the 1840s and wealthy and aristocratic people continued to be drawn to the town. Proceeding west along the seafront from Brunswick Town, Adelaide Crescent and Palmeira Square, begun in 1830 but abandoned then picked up again in 1849-50,

are fine example of early Victorian architecture. Here the Georgian bow windows and neo classical designs have been replaced by grand terraces in neo renaissance and Victorian Italianate styles, with canted bays and tripartite windows.

What place does Regency Square occupy?

Regency Square occupies a central position, both geographically and chronologically, in the developments outlined above. Together with Clarence Square and Russell Square, it forms a green heritage route from Churchill Square to the seafront and the i360. Informal observational evidence suggests that many i360 visitors are already choosing this route. So what is the experience of the visitor who makes this choice? The earlier and more modest Clarence and Russell Squares retain an intimate charm, helped by the reinstated period railings and fairly well kept soft landscaping. While the original Regency frontages in Clarence Square have unfortunately been replaced with later canted bays, the houses on two sides of Russell Square retain many typical attractive Regency features on a small scale – verandas, decorative ironwork and Corinthian pilasters. On leaving the enclosed intimacy of Russell Square and accessing Regency Square via a narrow twitten, one is struck by the far grander scale of the development and the open aspect to the sea. The larger houses in the square are magnificent rather than charming, and the mainly open lawns occupy a far more expansive area.

A very different green heritage route is formed by the seafront walk from Regency Square westwards to Adelaide Crescent, comprising four very different squares all open to the sea. Only slightly to the west of Regency Square, the earlier Bedford Square has a similar intimate charm to Clarence and Russell Squares. The houses have retained many period features and are very attractive. The striking contrast between this and the next development, Brunswick Town, emphasises the difference that the royal presence made to the town. Continuing along the seafront, the imposing Adelaide Crescent and Palmeira Square provide another contrast with their later architectural styles.

Regency Square as a local amenity, yesterday and today

Yesterday

The gardens now known as Regency Square are the result of land deals. Speculator Joshua Flesher Hanson bought up strips of open land on the wind-blown western part of the cliffs, Belle Vue fields. He set aside 70 plots on this land for houses around a central area which he designated as a communal, private garden for the key holders, i.e. the leasees of the 70 houses.

A committee was formed to enforce covenants and oversee the use of the gardens. There is little evidence to show how the gardens were used. It can be assumed that servant and other hoi polloi were not admitted to the gardens. Gentle promenading was probably the order of the day.



© The Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton & Hove

The covenants protecting the "privilege" key holders were to have expired in 1889, but in 1884, the Brighton Improvement Act brought the gardens into the ownership of the Borough council. However, the gardens were still only accessible to key holders¹. Once again, a committee, which ran from 1884 to about 1945, was formed. The expenses of maintaining the gardens were met by a levy imposed upon each of the houses in the Square (typically 3d in the £ in 1885 to 6d in the £ in 1940). This covered such cost as:

- salaries for a gardener and a uniformed constable (from 1897 until 1919 this was one and the same person, Mr Harris)
- painting the railings and lamp posts around the square
- painting seats in the gardens
- maintenance of a tool shed (there is no visual evidence of this shed being in the gardens themselves.
- creation of a flowerbed in the centre of the gardens (1893)
- illuminating the square for the 1911 coronation

The need for a constable seems to indicate that many people had access to the gardens. In 1887, 18 of the privileged houses were lodging houses, ~~so the population of Regency Square and~~

¹ Committee minute of 15 July 1896:

1. That the proposed sum of 7/6d to be charged for the keys is the lowest price they can be made at owing to the peculiar make of the present locks which are double ones.
2. It has never been customary from 1830 downwards to return the money paid for a key on passing from tenant to tenant.
3. If the Committee have to conform to the Bye-Laws as altered it will necessitate 8 new locks and about 70 new keys, which will consequently be inferior to those at present in use, the cost of which will devolve upon the Rates and which the Committee considers unfair.

by 1891 nearly 400 residents are recorded on the census in ~~those same houses~~. The gardens were an essential green lung.



Regency Square gardens in 1905 © Unknown

In October 1892 a majority of the Householders voted against Lawn Tennis being played in Regency Square, so the Committee deemed it advisable to abandon the idea and that the Occupiers of the Square be informed of the result - however, by 1995, the "ladies" had got their way and a tennis club was formed. This club lapsed at some point between then and 1907 when the subject of tennis and, additionally, croquet was on the table again. Permission was not granted until 1912. By the time of WW2, the tennis courts had disappeared, but the evidence for a well-used leisure space is clear.

It would seem that, despite the gates and railings around the gardens and despite the gardens still being considered "private ground", by the time of the war, locks were broken, allowing children to cause damage. In 1942, the final blow fell: the railings were commandeered by the government and removed. The minutes of the committee state: The Chairman replied that as the Enclosure had been entirely taken over by the Royal Air Force and Local Authority the Committee had no work to do and consequently nothing to report.

Following the war, the gardens remained, from all evidence, in a relatively poor state. There would have been some use by residents and patrons of the West Pier. The area was generally a poor one with most houses being lodging houses. Evidence from local home owners points to much extremely cramped accommodation and some fairly modest hotels. Many of the so-called hotels were "flatlet houses". These properties were home to large numbers of people.² Once again, the green space had become a vital breathing space for residents.

² 1972 Kelly's Directory shows the numbers of flatlets in each house: No. 28, 16 flatlets, No 38 had 15 and there were 8 flatlets in No. 42.



Aerial View of Brighton

AIRFILMS LTD. LONDON. 15A

Regency Square post-war, pre-car park © Unknown

However, ~~but~~ in the early 1960s, the Borough Council needed to boost Brighton ~~and a~~ regional shopping hub.

In 1963, there was a proposal to turn the whole of the gardens into a surface car park. Fortunately, this was met with howls of protest - but might indicate that the gardens were not seen as an important amenity.

From 1967-1968 the gardens simply did not exist. They were the hole in the ground that was to become an underground car park. This car park did not, and does not on the whole, benefit home owners at all. It possibly benefits local businesses, who are an important part of the community.



© Unknown

The Regency Society submitted images and outline plans showing how the gardens could look post car park. Unfortunately these imaginative plans were never fully completed. The planners seemed to have considered that the gardens would still be merely for promenading. No activity is shown on the lawns. It is impossible to know if that reflects the reality of the day.

With the formation of the Regency Square Area Society, the roof of the car park (ie the gardens) were occasionally turned to occasional excellent use in addition to its mundane daily use.



Regency Square 1985 © Suzanne Hinton

The Society was keen to promote the use of the gardens. The first event which was to have been held in the gardens was a fete to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer in 1978.³ In 1981, 1986 and 2002 the gardens were brought to life with fetes to celebrate three other royal events. Alas, the planned event for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 was washed out by a typical seaside deluge.

The brown grass in the 1986 photos (below) was a result of the drought/ heat wave of that year and is a reminder that much of the grass in the gardens relies on a very thin layer of soil. Originally, the gardens were criss-crossed with a system of sprinklers. These ceased to function after a very few years, leaving the gardens vulnerable to both dry and wet weather.

³ Rain stopped play, but the Metropole Hotel generously offered to hold the party in the Clarence Room.



Tea is served to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer 1981
© Suzanne Hinton



The "Pierrotters" perform at the fete to celebrate the wedding of the Duke of York to Miss Sarah Ferguson 1986
© Suzanne Hinton

Rather more ambitiously, the Committee invited a far wider range of entertainers for the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002. These included the Dieppe Town Band, Punch and Judy as well as Morris dancers. © Suzanne Hinton



In 2015, the Regency Square Area Society welcomed an approach from the Roundabout Theatre Company to pitch their marquee on the middle garden for the duration of the Brighton Festival. The performances were a success - but possibly more for visitors than residents as three main problems arose which it would be well to avoid in future.

- There was not one tent but two, ~~the~~ being a bar which set up competition with long-established local hotels, pubs and restaurants,
- the portable toilets were within meters of the windows of flats and hotel breakfast rooms
- the grass suffered for about nine months following the removal of the tent



State of grass after removal of Roundabout Theatre tent in 2015 © Suzanne Hinton



Roundabout theatre bar 2015
© Suzanne Hinton

Today

The gardens are a space for:

- rough sleeping
- listening to music
- push-bike parking
- parking motorbikes
- gazing up at the i360
- rehearsing (see below)
- practicing basic 'parcours'
- picnicking (all gardens used equally)
- dog-walking (middle and lower gardens)
- reading (readers prefer to sit on benches)
- taking a pleasant short-cut (from Russell Square to the promenade or the i360)
- children-walking (many a toddler has taken his/her early steps on the soft grass).



Regency Square acts as a rehearsal space to the World Taekwondo Championship hopefuls August 2016 © Suzanne Hinton

All of these activities with some minor exceptions such as very loud music, motorbike parking and damaging 'parcours' stunts, are very welcome. It is vital that the space be preserved as an attractive, simple, clean space that will continue to be enjoyed over the next decades.

The Challenges

- Litter
- Easily damaged grass
- Maintenance of shrubs, flowers.
- Anti-social behaviour (is a 'Constable needed as in 1885)

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