



## **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.<sup>1</sup>

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).<sup>2</sup>

### **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 Square<sup>3</sup>, 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.



### **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.

	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>Response %</b>
<b>Regency Square</b>	39	54%
<b>Sussex heights</b>	15	21%
<b>Kings Road</b>	5	7%
<b>Castle + Stone St</b>	4	6%
<b>Russell Square</b>	2	3%
<b>Queensbury Mews</b>	2	3%
<b>Cavendish Hse</b>	1	1%
<b>Metropole Court</b>	1	1%
<b>Preston Street</b>	1	1%
<b>Clarence Square</b>	1	1%
<b>Not provided</b>	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
<b>Total rankings</b>		43	<b>Total rankings</b>		53	<b>Total rankings</b>		45
<b>Average ranking</b>		1.74	<b>Average ranking</b>		1.74	<b>Average ranking</b>		2.22
<b>Total % reject</b>		47%	<b>Total % reject</b>		32%	<b>Total % reject</b>		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
<b>No. Respondents</b>	21	29	31	7	7	14	5
<b>% Respondents</b>	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
<b>Period Railings</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	11	1	18	2	40
	<b>% Respondents</b>	15%	1%	25%	3%	56%
<b>Period Street lamps</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	10	0	17	4	41
	<b>% Respondents</b>	14%	0%	24%	6%	57%
<b>Chailey brick pavement</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	7	1	21	5	38
	<b>% Respondents</b>	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
<b>Picnic Area</b>	No. Respondents	12	3	23	2	32
	% Respondents	17%	4%	32%	3%	44%
<b>Exhibitions: art/sculpture</b>	No. Respondents	12	2	24	5	29
	% Respondents	17%	3%	33%	7%	40%
<b>Dogs/Dog walking</b>	No. Respondents	13	1	17	9	32
	% Respondents	18%	1%	24%	13%	44%
<b>Education projects w/ schools</b>	No. Respondents	9	0	42	2	19
	% Respondents	13%	0%	58%	3%	26%
<b>Biosphere</b>	No. Respondents	13	0	39	2	18
	% Respondents	18%	0%	54%	3%	25%
<b>Theatre/festival performance</b>	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 activities<sup>4</sup> 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).

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





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)*

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
<b>No. Respondents</b>	28	13	31	6	4	4	1	4	5
<b>% Respondents</b>	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
<b>No. Respondents</b>	8	10	14	3
<b>% Respondents</b>	11%	14%	19%	4%