

## **Arundel Chamber of Commerce Position Statement on the Contemporary Regeneration of Arundel Town Centre**

For the majority of its history Arundel has been a busy port and flourishing market town. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century there was a growth of antiques shops but also the loss of many traditional high street retailers due to the rise of supermarkets and out-of-town retail centres. Over the last 10 years the town's existence as a major tourist destination has led to the rapid growth in the food and drink service sector, while online shopping has proved a challenge to many 'bricks & mortar' retailers. These trends have all threatened the vitality and character of the town centre and its ability to offer a truly varied and multi-functional 'High Street'.

The town has also become dominated by the motor car, to the detriment of its historical, architectural and cultural appeal; this is combined with a distinct lack of pedestrian friendly spaces in the town centre where people can gather, observe, meet friends, relax and walk freely around the shops.

However Arundel has also increasingly become a creative and entrepreneurial hub, boasting a plethora of SME's (over 250 small businesses in a town with just under 4,000 inhabitants) and witnessed by the recent birth of the 'creative collective' AKIN with over 40 members. Arundel also hosts one of the oldest and largest walking gallery trails in the UK, and it is no surprise it is home to some nationally renowned contemporary art galleries and artists. The town continues to attract predominantly independent businesses and therefore has managed to not become yet another 'clone town'.

Strong evidence continues to build of the benefits of attractive places where people on foot feel welcome and proves that investment in better streets and places can deliver quantifiable commercial returns and create a more connected local economy. Experiential shopping is recognised as the future of the 'high street'. The impact of the Covid crisis in 2020 also reiterates the need for a re-assessment of how we use local services and businesses.

Arundel now has a growing body of evidence on the views of residents and businesses, regarding what could be done to invigorate and re-envision the town centre:-

1. LUC Design proposals (2018)
2. Love Arundel Project feedback (2019)
3. Feedback on Project Phoenix proposals (2020)
4. Feedback on Project Summer proposals (2020)

Arundel Chamber of Commerce would therefore look forward to working closely with Arundel Town Council, the Love Arundel project and other stakeholders on any plans for a contemporary regeneration of Arundel town centre (i.e. those streets with a retail or food/drink service offering). The Chamber would pledge the support of its members to any initiative that fully engages with residents and businesses, helps develop tourism and the wider local economy, increases dwell-times of visitors and attracts new businesses.

### Arundel Chamber of Commerce:

- *Representing businesses in Arundel, from sole traders to Limited companies, and from those with a 'High Street' presence through to virtual home-workers.*
- *Giving local businesses a voice, so their concerns and priorities are heard at all levels of government from Town, District, County to national levels; plus with other stakeholders such as the Highways Agency, SDNP and Arundel Festival.*
- *Bringing together local businesses so they can build new collaborative relationships, share best practice, encourage new business opportunities and provide practical support to each other.*
- *Promoting, encouraging and supporting a vibrant and sustainable local economy.*