

IN MY VIEW



James Child, project lead for the town centre and director of Whitehill and Bordon Regeneration Company.

"It is very important to us that the new town centre is home to a wide range of independent businesses as this brings character and individuality."

"Therefore we are opening a variety of small flexible workspaces throughout the town centre, including micro offices, market stalls and pop up retail."

"The business community also need grow-on space, manufacturing space, storage and warehousing and we are developing spaces just outside the town centre for these."

"We are working hard to create an eco-system of workspace that allows all business to thrive as the town population grows."

IN MY VIEW



Dayne Cartwright (pictured with partner Tracey), founder of mobile coffee company Acorns Coffee and Cake.

"When my wife Tracey and I moved to Bordon two years ago, we were attracted by the regeneration and the opportunities it offered."

"I remember driving through and thinking now is the time to invest in the area!"

"Two years later we started Acorns Coffee and Cake Ltd."

"The reaction has been overwhelming since we opened, but without the network and community SiGNAL has created, there is no way we would have made the amazing start we have."

"Through SiGNAL, and with the support of the SiGNAL community, we have received clear planning and guidance, met like-minded small businesses and created relationships, even friendships."

"SiGNAL and the small businesses in Bordon are completely aligned to our value of staying local and serving the community."

"We use local businesses as our suppliers wherever possible – in fact, we've been able to collaborate with businesses I never even knew existed before, who have equally been nurtured by the entrepreneurial culture of the area."

"There is a real buzz and energy from my customers about the regeneration and what was once a 'it'll never happen' has become positive excitement for the immediate future of Bordon. It's a great place to grow a business."

SPECIAL REPORT: It's one of the fastest-growing 'healthy towns' in the country. So what opportunities will there be for independent businesses? Our go-ahead area: why Bordon is now rapidly becoming the best place in UK to set up in business

SPECIAL REPORT



by Emma Selby
SiGNAL boss and business entrepreneur

Whitehill and Bordon is in only phase one of its impressive town centre redevelopment – and yet is already being talked about as one of the best places to run a business in the UK.

Let's take a close look at what that means for the town and for its resident business owners.

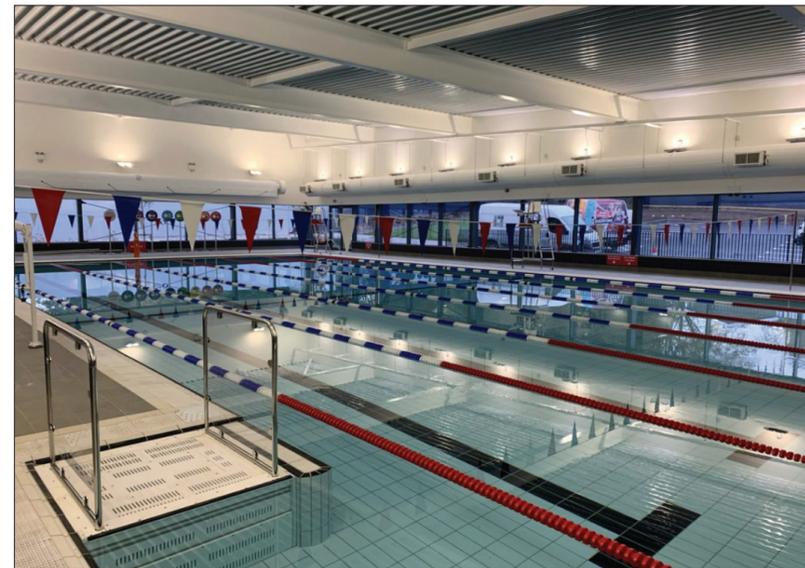
Whitehill and Bordon, on the edge of the South Downs in north-east Hampshire, was formerly a military town, home to REME, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

In 2016 REME was relocated to Lyneham, leaving a gaping hole in what was already a struggling town.

Investment was secured at national level to regenerate the town centre and local economy while engaging the community with a new sense of place and purpose.

The new post-garrison plans for Bordon include a completely new town centre surrounded by 3,000 new homes. A number of developers manage the house building and local infrastructure: Taylor Wimpey, Zero C, Barratt Homes, David Wilson and Abri (formerly Radian), to name just five.

Infrastructure projects include the Future Skills Centre, a progressive further education centre training bricklayers, plumbers and carpenters, BASE enterprise centre, the new relief road, the sports and leisure centre, the BOSC – a cricket pavilion, bar and restaurant with



Inside the magnificent new Bordon leisure centre



How the interior of the long-awaited Shed development will look

great sports facilities – and the new Oakmoor Secondary School.

The developer responsible for the building of the new Bordon town centre is the Whitehill and Bordon Regeneration Company (WBRC).

WBRC is a joint venture between housebuilders Taylor Wimpey and the Dorchester Group, regeneration specialists. Project leader James Child of WBRC had a radical idea at the outset to put small, independent business at the heart of the redevelopment.

Under his leadership, WBRC determined to collaborate closely with local business to transform this former garrison town from the bottom up into a town of real business opportunity and innovation.

Harnessing the drive, ambition and purpose of local business owners to make the town centre redevelopment a business development success has proved to be a stroke of genius.

The role of small business

I was running a company in the area – Your Local Business Hub – that was doing the work of bringing small businesses together in regional town centres to collaborate and grow their businesses.

I was contacted very early on in the process and tasked with developing a new business hub on the same model in Bordon, working with local business owners to drive economic growth as the new town centre took

shape. As I started talking to businesses in the town, it became clear that as well as a hub for training and networking, they needed affordable and flexible workspace – in small units – to grow their businesses. The idea for SiGNAL was born.

SiGNAL is a pollinator business designed to attract businesses to the area and forge connections between them.

Flexible co-working spaces, a focus on workspace for trades and our weekly business events draw large numbers of businesses and we soon saw the results of our efforts, a more connected business community throughout the town and an influx of new business into Bordon.

SiGNAL Bordon, located in old army buildings just outside the site of the new town centre, is now a thriving village of diverse workspaces inhabited by a lively local business community. All the resident businesses

are connected to one another by friendship and to the wider town by our online platform My Town Online.

We have started to take on larger 'grow on' workspaces around the town to accommodate our tenants that will outgrow their current offices

The role of the local trade sector

At SiGNAL, alongside the traditional workspaces, we also have shared workshop space with workbenches and shared machinery, the first of its kind to be used by commercial carpenters and joiners in the south east.

There is a thriving trade and light industrial sector here in Bordon and a number of busy industrial sites and office sites around the town.

We plan to expand SiGNAL workshops to other locations in and around the town, making shared industrial space available for as many trades businesses as

IN MY VIEW



Cllr Andy Tree, leader of Whitehill Town Council and small business owner.

"A new era of working from home is a huge opportunity for businesses owners and larger organisations and Whitehill & Bordon is ideally placed to support this growth as part of the town's regeneration. The new town centre development, coupled with

business support from local hub SiGNAL, creates huge potential.

As a director/owner of multiple businesses, I have set down my roots in Lindford/Bordon and cannot overstate the natural beauty and surroundings that we enjoy here, something I value highly – and the business community is second to none."

create. The Shed will be home to exciting and exotic street food, fresh produce, delicatessen and pop-up retail as well as a craft brewery, ice-cream parlour and a juice and coffee bar.

These independents represent the best of local small business – not a chain in sight – and will energise the town centre with footfall from the very outset and service.

The rest of the town centre is a mix of residential, commercial and public facilities, including the brand-new sports and leisure facility that opened up last November.

The outdoor environment

There has always been a connection between small business owners and sport, with mindset and motivation being so important to the success of entrepreneurs – and Bordon definitely has something for everyone in this regard.

Home to ultra-athlete Suzie Chan, there are numerous sports clubs and communities here, including a really popular park run.

The nearby Woolmer Ranges, Alice Holt Forest and the South Downs provide lots of excellent open spaces and beauty spots. For open water swimming – very popular in our business community – Frensham Pond is only a few minutes' drive away and the coast can be reached in 30 minutes.

The role of local government

For regional businesses to thrive, there must be strong links between business and local government and we are delighted to count members of the town and district councils among our members of the SiGNAL BizHub.

At SiGNAL our team are working alongside the town council and the Whitehill and Bordon Regeneration Company to deliver a town centre that is aligned with the needs of small business and that champions

possible. There is much to look forward to in the way of new commercial space in Bordon too, with Tech Forest, a site being made available for tender this month, and designated as an Enterprise Zone, plus Broxhead Enterprise Park.

As you can imagine, the building of 3,000 homes creates a great deal of work for the local construction sector.

The trade community in Bordon and nearby are all connected by various online groups, for example the Bordon Builders Network group on Facebook, where experiences are shared and opportunities offered.

The new town centre

Businesses never stay the same for long and commercial space in the town constantly changes hands as enterprises shrink and expand.

Businesses that we have helped to grow in our current premises can now start to look at larger or more aspirational workspaces, while other more traditional office-based companies are seeking to break up and downsize with the new demand for hub and spoke work arrangements.

SiGNAL will be opening two destination workspaces in the town centre with a mix of highly-desirable office space, creative studios and attractive shared desk spaces designed to accommodate the new post Covid 'work near home' dynamic.

Central to the day-to-day lifestyle of our new businesses, residents and remote workers in the town centre is the much anticipated Shed.

The Shed is a fabulous showcase of small independent businesses, generating a vibe and energy that only the passion of the small independents can



How The Shed will look



their resilience and agility. The Shed, which opens this spring, will bring independent street food and grocery provision right into the heart of Bordon, as well as independent retail.

There are a number of people at East Hampshire District Council responsible for helping the development of small business in the area and a great team of people working with us specifically on the regeneration of the town.

There is a newly-formed Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, responsible for helping local businesses fund new hires and new skills in their teams.

Procurement criteria set at central government level ensures a lot of local government procurement is now through local SMEs which is key to providing work to business in the area and supporting the local economy.

An area that's alive!

The rapid and extensive house-building activity around Whitehill and Bordon is intelligently supported by robust provision for small business to thrive, making Bordon a great place in which to invest.

IN MY VIEW



Joanna Hoddinot, founder of Balanced Bodies Injury Rehab based at SiGNAL.

"While I live 30 minutes south of Bordon, when I was looking around for a suitable location to establish my new business, Bordon was a beacon of hope in terms of suitability."

"When visiting Bordon I was impressed by the level of development occurring and felt there was a huge growth potential for establishing a thriving business."

"In addition, SiGNAL offered me unparalleled support in terms of helping me set up the fundamentals of the clinic from weekly master classes across a range of very relevant topics, to spotlighting suitable grants, to introducing me to their network of contacts."

"While my clinic has a long way to go, the first six months have exceeded expectations and I am proud to be integrating into the Whitehill and Bordon community."

IN MY VIEW



Gary Newell, Jigsaw Property Maintenance and founder of Bordon Builders Facebook Group.

"Bordon is quickly becoming the ideal location for tradesmen of all types, with the vast majority of 2,400 new homes already built across the town, which will ultimately bring in around 9,000 new residents to the area, once the regeneration is complete."

"The developers responsible to the Bordon regeneration project are careful to use local skills and resources wherever possible."

"The regeneration is a long-term project meaning there is an ongoing demand for builders, plumbers, electricians, carpenters and pretty much all the trades to become involved in the new town centre and the new homes."

"On the other side of the coin, you have the existing older houses and ex-military buildings which offer numerous possibilities for renovation, modernisation and general maintenance."

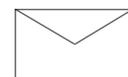
"Bordon is lucky in that it has a range of existing industrial units offering studios and workshops for the local trades, at affordable prices."

"On the edge of the South Downs, Bordon is perfectly located close to the A3 for ease of access, and it is surrounded by many affluent areas such as Petersfield, Haslemere and Farnham."

"Many of these surrounding villages have some extremely old dwellings dating back several hundred years which means specialist trades are also in demand."



House building continues at pace in Bordon



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you live or work in Bordon and Whitehill? Are you excited about the future? What are you most looking forward to? And could other towns in our area learn from the regeneration project? Let us know – email your thoughts to news@farnhamherald.com