

Bexhill Heritage

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Caring for Bexhill's past,
present and future.

1st June 2019

Dear Councillor Oliver

Destination Leisure Bexhill and the Drill Hall Application RR 2019/430

The publicity around Bexhill Heritage's strongly held view that the front, brick, castellated part of the Drill Hall (some five metres deep), be retained in any redevelopment will not have escaped your notice. This is also the view of all our Consultants. They include a qualified, local, award winning practicing architect of long experience which includes historic buildings; a local, practicing, historic building consultant; a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, who founded his practice in the city of York where he worked with historic buildings for over 25 years and a qualified planner who has worked for East Sussex County Council and a District Council very similar to Rother where he also managed the Council's property portfolio. He also worked for Rother District Council itself.

Our view is supported by all our membership who responded to our questionnaire, and by all political groupings and individuals who responded, albeit the Conservative Group did express a caveat.

We had asked, more than once, that the master plan accompanying the outline application be amended to show this most important section of the hall be retained. We had expressed this wish in items of correspondence and also at a meeting with him and some of his colleagues (members and officers) at a meeting on the 6th March. The Leader was still considering this around the time of the elections.

He had not replied but given the above we were expecting a positive response. Clearly we will not receive any answer from Councillor Maynard so we again put our request forward for consideration. A copy of our letter and plan of the 7th February 2019 is enclosed. I should emphasize that the plan is merely a suggestion.

We have had the Council's consultant's report of August 2018 quoted to us in part refutation, we have pointed out that the consultant's conclusions upon the architectural merit of the building were based on an assessment of the whole of the building as an entity not the distinctive, attractive, and well detailed front section alone.

We noticed that elements of the report were quite supportive of the merits of the building and the different consultant's report of 2014 actually proposed some options that retained it in whole and in part. We will be happy to go into detail on these points should you wish it. In any event we disagree with other elements of the recent report, and where their assessment of merits uses the word "moderate", we would point out that this is not at all condemnatory, as it usually means "average", it is an adjective that is not dismissive of worth.

The County Archaeologist's report is when read carefully, quite telling. Even though he has no brief to comment on the architectural merits of any aspect, he reminds the Council of national planning policy and quotes from it the point we have already made "The ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in whether such loss should be permitted". This of course relates to heritage building demolition. He also disagrees with the reason for the assessment of the building as "moderate". He further draws attention to the section of the Consultant's report which specifically describes the front section of the building. We gather this is because it caught his eye.

Finally can I emphasize that we are not asking you to interfere with the planning process. You are the embodiment of the applicant and as such are entitled to alter any aspect of the application as it progresses through the system, so as to meet emerging issues. You may well choose to do this in respect of other matters as they arise.

This letter is written on behalf of the Chairman who is currently on holiday and has seen it in draft form. We look forward to hearing from you on this long running matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Beales". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Yours sincerely".

David Beales Planning Consultant Bexhill Heritage