

Bexhill Heritage

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Caring for Bexhill's past,
present and future.

27th August 2019

Dear Ms Edwards

Gullivers Bowls Club Knole Road Bexhill RR/2014/235

We have looked carefully at the plans (revised in June 2014), our overall conclusions relate to the residential elements fronting Knole Road and in particular their appearance and impact on the adjacent listed buildings and open space. We have looked at the site history; the detail of the plans; the Local Plan, including the DASA; and the many representations, including those as recent as late August.

We oppose the development of the site. We believe the proposed building will adversely affect the setting of the adjacent listed building for the following reasons –

- It will create a corridor-like heavily enclosed street effect at odds with the historically imprinted aspect of the front Knole Road side of the listed terrace, and the open space, which provides part of the setting of the listed building.
- This oppressive enclosed street scene will be further emphasised by the four storey height of the new build and its location overpoweringly close to Knole Road.
- The unwelcome contrast between the openness of the street scene at present and the enclosure envisaged in the application will be emphasized apparent as the open space (new Bowling Green) will be largely hidden from public view and will make little contribution to the setting of the listed building. Any form of development here would have a similar adverse impact.
- There is good reason to believe that the original layout of the residential development backing onto the present Bowling Green site in Brassey Road, Cantelupe Road, Middlesex Road and in Knole Road, the listed building fronting the site, was a deliberate act of townscape creativity. This, we think, was not only to provide an appropriate setting for the now listed building and a benefit to the residents thereof but also to provide a strong visual feature and pleasing amenity for the town. Such creativity should not be dismissed however damaged it may have become over the years by the poor buildings and car parking now found on the site. Some of these visual problems could be improved by modest investment.
- The new build will not follow a true curve unlike the listed building, making it even more at odds with that powerful townscape statement.
- These views seem to be shared by that august body the Victorian Society in their correspondence with the Council.
- In any event the building proposed is simply not good enough for such an important site and the area will be visually impoverished as a consequence. This is further commented on below.

- In all these respects the development is thus contrary to compelling elements of the Local Plan Core Strategy and the DASA of 2019 awaiting approval together with relevant government policy.

Should the Council nevertheless decide that the principle of residential development on this frontage is acceptable we wish to make the following observations:

- The format of the development in Knole Road was originally designed as long ago as 2006. Planning policies and public expectations have changed since then and the importance of the setting of listed buildings has grown in significance. Knole Road received a highly commended award by the Sussex Heritage Trust July 2017.
- The plans under consideration were developed more than five years ago. Whilst at that time they were improved by your Conservation Officer, the intervening period has only served to emphasize the need for even greater care being taken in building design, particularly at sensitive locations such as this. This is still not happening, a point lent weight by the appearance of the South Beach flats in the Conservation area (Sea Road) which are clearly too tall/ bulky and clumsily designed.
- The design of the proposed Knole Road building is of average quality but nowhere near the high standard needed for this truly unique site, perhaps the only remaining open site of such significance adjacent to the Conservation Area and within yards of an important listed building.
- The 2014 assessment by your Conservation Officer states the building has a “*whiff of the institutionalised character which so often typifies elderly persons housing schemes and falls a little short of the more imaginative architectural interpretations of this type of housing*” although she does go on to support the scheme. As we say above we hope some lessons have been learned in the last five years. No doubt her current view will be reported to Members when the Planning Committee Agenda is published.
- The appearance of the ends of the building is extremely worrying. Often overlooked in drawing assessment, the fact is that these end elevations will be very visible and the four storey front elements will be very prominent. They seem to us to be poor and will detract greatly from the street scene, they are rather monolithic and unrelieved and weaken the better aspects of the north and south elevations. Contrast these please with the quality of the end elevations of the listed building opposite.
- We believe the design of the building should be subject to a wholesale review. Neither the applicants nor the Council should shy away from this task.

Our conclusion is that the scheme is uninspired and does not pay sufficient attention to its surrounding and needs more work. If this cannot be achieved then it should be refused. We make particular reference to policy EN3 and the principles in the Core Strategy appendix 4.

Yours sincerely



Planning Officer, Bexhill Heritage



Founder, Trustee & Chairman, Bexhill Heritage