

Bexhill Heritage

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Caring for Bexhill's past,
present and future.

Rother District Council
Town Hall
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN39 3JX

14 August 2018

Dear Mr Corke,

RR/2018/1815/P Demolition of existing Sea Angling Club and construction of a new single storey Sea Angling Club with separate kiosk and public toilet facilities.

On behalf of Bexhill Heritage Members, we regret that Bexhill Heritage must object to this application. We firmly believe that the design of the building falls well below the standard necessary, failing as it does to take sufficient account of the prominence and importance of the site and the increasing use of the coastal area as an amenity and for public recreation.

Whilst we support the Sea Angling Club in its expansion, and the Council in its wish to improve facilities and the appearance of the immediate surroundings of the site, it is clear to us that the building will at best appear mediocre and at worst very poor.

We regard the scheme, if implemented as shown, as an opportunity missed. The application "Design and Access statement" acknowledges and describes the importance of the site under the section "Vision and Objectives" in the following terms-

"Strategically important as the Gateway to Bexhill Sea front"

and

"could be a fantastic addition to the Coastal Culture Trail"

We have looked carefully at the submitted plans and conclude that the building will nowhere meet the laudable expectations set out in the application documents. The best that can be said is that it will look better than what is currently at the site, but that is not sufficient to contemplate agreeing to it.

We must draw attention to the fact that the proposal does not meet the expectation in the Adopted Local Plan. In particular Policy EN3; Design Quality states -----

"New development will be required to be of high design quality by:

(i) *Contributing positively to the character of the site and surroundings, including taking opportunities to improve areas of poor visual character....*

(II)(g) *Building Appearance & Architectural Quality*

The visual appearance, both in terms of architectural style and form, massing and scale, of individual buildings is a key component to people's enjoyment of places.

and

High architectural quality, beauty and inspiration, and clear following through of an architectural vision in materials and detailing will be expected regardless of building style.

It is impossible for us to reconcile these Local Plan Policy Statements with the proposal before us.

Leaving aside the overall poor impression the building will give, which members will gain from a review of the documents the roadside elevation comprises of an array of three toilet doors, a service door entrance to the kiosk (shuttered when closed) and the back of the accommodation. Thus, the roadside elevation albeit articulated, will appear particularly uninteresting. Another important view that from Galley Hill, particularly from the open space to which many people have recourse, will show the flat felted roof quite prominently. This is less than acceptable in light of the “Gateway Building” envisaged in the Design Statement, and does not match the expectations of the Policy of the Local Plan quoted above.

The building the Architects have designed, timber and render finish with some concrete is not inherently poor, indeed it would be acceptable in some locations however it is simply not good enough here.

Bexhill Heritage is certain that a building of truly memorable and exciting design can be achieved, incorporating all the facilities the Council seeks, and realisable on a modest budget. We suggest an architectural brief with the different elements signified by different colours and forms, with a noticeable feature element, perhaps a suggestion of a Martello Tower, as they were a very strong feature of the Bexhill sea front all but one having been lost, but one of which stood very close to the site. Alternatively, some echo of the Galley Hill Coast Guard lookout building could be incorporated. The cladding materials could be a mixture including metal (copper, zinc for e.g.) and the building might well include one or even two small holiday flats to provide an all year-round income stream.

To achieve this Bexhill Heritage would be pleased to work with Rother District Council staff, their architects, and members bringing our skills and experience to bear to the extent that you feel appropriate.

However, for the present scheme we have no alternative but to suggest that the application be withdrawn. If it is to proceed to determination by committee or Council, then we urge that it be refused for the following reasons-

1. The design of the building is of insufficient quality for this prominent site on the increasingly significant eastern end of Bexhill’s East Parade. This gateway site on the Coastal Culture Trail, and its surroundings, will not be enhanced by the proposed building and it will fail to match the long-term vision of the seafront and the substantial improvements already implemented and still envisaged.
2. The proposal is in conflict with Policy EN3 of the adopted local plan, section (i) and (ii) a) and g).

Yours sincerely,



David Beales (Bexhill Heritage Planning Officer)



Raymond Konyn (Founder, Trustee & Chairman)