

# Bexhill Heritage

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Caring for Bexhill's past,  
present and future.

Pauline Dun

The Planning Inspectorate

Room 3D Eagle Wing

Temple Quay House

2 The Square, Bristol

20<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

**Appeal Under Section 78**

**Flat 1, 45 Sea Road, Bexhill TN40 1JJ**

**Drop Kerb to front of property to create off road parking. RR.2019/2192/p**

**Ms Alison Fowler App/U1430/W/20/3253981**

Dear Sir/Madam

I write on behalf of Bexhill Heritage to oppose this proposal. Bexhill Heritage is a properly constituted Charity Commission Registered organisation with some 300 members dedicated to the past, present and future wellbeing of the town's built environment. Our activities range from actual renovations, such as the recently (August 2020) completed Grade 11 listed shelter on the East Parade, carried out by member's voluntary labour; and other activities such as schools liaison; public information and advice; and commenting on planning applications.

We have lodged three letters in relation to this development which will have been made available to the Inspector by the Council, and a further letter regarding a subsequent application RR/2020/1105 for the same scheme. We have particular concerns about the matter as it falls within the town Conservation Area. The damage to the appearance of the Conservation Area which we anticipated last year has unfortunately proved to be well founded.

Overall our view is that the pleasing appearance of Sea Road has now been seriously marred by the construction of the hard surfaced area which is visually unacceptable.

The situation can only be remedied by the dismissal of the appeal and action by the Council to reduce or remove entirely the hard standing and require the creation of significant landscaping in its place. We are also concerned about the loss of front garden walls which are important features of the Conservation Area lending continuity and homogeneity to the street scenes. We recognise that

in this case the now paved area, formerly a garden had been neglected in recent years and the front garden wall allowed to degrade almost to pavement level. The principle that neglect should be not be used to justify a proposal which is normally unacceptable bears on features as well as on buildings.

Our previous correspondence on the two applications highlights our concerns and merits repetition as follows –

- The paving of the front garden in its entirety and the parking of vehicles almost the whole, together with the loss of the last vestiges of the front wall which defined the front garden area is out of character with the Conservation Area and damaging to its appearance.
- The loss of opportunity for continuing to nurture a green space for tall, short and ground cover vegetation is damaging to the Conservation Area.
- The landscaping plans which have been submitted with the later application clearly show the applicants intentions will do virtually nothing to mitigate ill effects described above. In reality the presence of three vehicles on the frontage of the three flats leaves no space on the site to support sufficient landscaping to make any significant difference to the street scene.
- The plant material placed on the forecourt in recent weeks is completely obscured by the parked vehicles.
- The plant material small and in pots will not survive in the hard winter conditions experienced so close to the sea front. Substantial shrubs planted in properly prepared ground will survive – there is no room for these with the paving and parking present on the site. In any event they would remain hidden from view by parked vehicles and probably would not be grown higher than the low window sills of the ground floor flat.
- The applicant's agents have stated that the front of the premises comprised paving and hard surfacing. They omit to say that there was also considerable amount of shrub planting present, together with the remnants of a front boundary wall with loose laid slabs atop.
- The statement of Assessment of Significance submitted with the more recent application states "due to pre-existing condition of frontage the site had no aesthetic significance". This is at odds with the photographs provided by the applicants and the Google street view record.
- We believe that the open fronted parking area is inimical to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using the eastern side of Sea Road. We know that much of the pedestrian traffic along Sea Road reflects the elderly age profile of the population of the town. We would venture that there is a high proportion of the elderly living on the fringes of the town centre, something we have had plenty of opportunity to observe as we have a base at St. Barnabas Church nearby where we often have an outside meeting point. The frail and elderly have plenty to cope with without the wide open frontage of no. 45 and the vehicle movements off and onto it. The same is true of southbound cyclists.
- The County Council is soon to introduce new parking arrangements in the town centre. These will increase the pressure on front gardens as residents become more anxious to park on their property unrestricted by the new regulatory regime. At present there is no enforcement of on street restrictions.
- The precedent which would be set by granting of permission cannot readily be set aside. Even in Sea Road there are enough garden walls of various ages remaining for them to form a significant and positive part of the townscape. Adjacent to the north, the former two

dwellings, now doctor's surgery, retains virtually all its garden and a modern front wall. To the south is a mix which retains a pleasant appearance overall.

- The Committee of Bexhill Heritage has become concerned that the front garden walls in the Conservation Area are increasingly at risk from partial or entire demolition in order to facilitate the parking of vehicles including motor cycles. Walls form an important element in the streetscape because of their continuity, irrespective of their age and materials of construction. At the last meeting of the Committee (16<sup>th</sup> July 2020) it was agreed to receive a report on the possibility of an Article IV Direction to prevent demolition of such walls in the Conservation Area without planning permission. Bexhill Heritage would provide evidence to a request to Rother DC by carrying out a photographic survey. This demonstrates the level of concern which exists about the possible erosion of character of the Conservation Area and the contribution which walls and gardens make to that character. It is due to be further considered at the meeting of the Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020.
- We know that there are sound policy reasons for refusal of the application already stated in the refusal by the Council, which we espouse. We ask that the appeal be dismissed and will encourage the Council to take steps to remedy the position.

Yours sincerely



BSc. DipT. Planning Consultant to Bexhill Heritage