

Bexhill Heritage

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Caring for Bexhill's past,
present and future.

28th July 2020

Dear Mrs Sadighia

Drop kerb to front of property to create off road parking (part retrospective) RR/2020/1105

The ongoing efforts of the property owner to make permanent the loss of garden and boundary wall here gives rise to our continuing concerns and we believe the damage to the appearance of the street scene and Conservation Area should be reversed. We have previously proposed that the Council take enforcement action and firmly believe that that this request should be pursued. No doubt you will await the result of the appeal upon which we await the relevant notification from the Council so that we may comment to the Inspectorate.

Perhaps we do not need to reiterate the objections we have previously lodged to the paving over of the front garden and the damaging and permanent effect of this on the appearance of the area and the precedent this sets for other such unauthorised and erosive acts.

Nevertheless we believe –

1. The paving of the front garden for the parking of vehicles and the loss of walling which frequently results is out of character with the Conservation Area and damaging to its appearance.
2. The loss of opportunity for continuing to nurture a green space for tall, short and ground cover vegetation is damaging to the Conservation Area.
3. The more the pressure for off street car spaces builds, the more this is likely to happen leading to irreversible and unwelcome change.
4. The fact that this has happened across the whole of the frontage exacerbates the problems listed above.
5. The car parking strategy for the town centre to be implemented as soon as normality returns will increase the pressure on front gardens as residents become more anxious to park unrestricted by the proposed new regulatory regime.
6. The fact that the car parking proposal at the site has been previously resisted by refusal RR/2019/2192 has not deterred the sale of the upper floor flats at the site (July 2020) in respect of which the agents sale particulars advises for the two bedroom flat “will come with... an off road parking space”.
7. Access across the whole of the frontage of the site “converts” the possibility of two on street much needed public car parking spaces in the town centre into three private spaces. The double yellow lines are usually ignored due to lack of enforcement.
8. The plain fact is that with the three parking spaces there is insufficient space on the site to support sufficient landscaping to make any significant visual difference to the street scene. The landscape plans L101 and L102 seem to accept this and the agents reference to only one of them and the total lack of reference to the need for removal of new paving, removal of base and sub base and replacement by a growing medium, a specification of types of plant

material emphasizes that the applicants have not taken this seriously. The landscape drawings are risible. Further, the low window sills on the ground floor will ensure that any planting as indicated will not be welcome by the ground floor occupants and will be treated accordingly. The agents state that the front of the premises comprised paving and hard surfacing. They omit to say that there was also a considerable amount of shrub planting present, together with the remnants of a front boundary wall with loose laid slabs atop.

9. The statement of Assessment of Significance, in answer to the question on aesthetic significance, the answer is given "due to pre-existing condition of frontage the site had no aesthetic significance". This is clearly at odds with the photographs provided by the applicants.
10. 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 down Sea Road reflects the elderly age profile of the population. We would venture that there is a high proportion of elderly living on the fringes of the town centre, something we have plenty of opportunity to observe as we have had a base at the St. Barnabas's church where there is also a bus stop. The frail and elderly have plenty to cope with without the wide open car frontage of number 45 and the vehicle movements off and on it. The same is true of passing south bound cyclists.
11. The precedent which would be set by the granting of permission cannot be readily set aside. Even in Sea Road there are enough garden walls of various ages remaining for them to form part of the townscape. Adjacent to the north the two former dwellings now doctor's surgery retains virtually all its garden and a modern wall, to the south is a mix which retains a pleasant appearance overall.
12. The Committee of Bexhill Heritage has become concerned that front garden walls in the Conservation Area are increasingly at risk from partial or entire demolition on order to facilitate the parking of vehicles including motor cycles. Walls form an important element in the streetscape because of their present continuity, irrespective of their age and materials of construction. At the last meeting of the Committee (16th July 2020) it was agreed to receive a report on the possibility of an Article IV Direction to prevent demolition of such walls without prior planning permission. Bexhill Heritage would contribute to a request to Rother DC by carrying out a photographic survey. This demonstrates the level of concern which exists about the possible loss of character of the Conservation Area and the contribution that walls and gardens make to that character.

We know that there are good policy reasons for refusal of the application already stated in the refusal of RR/2020/2192 and we ask that this application be also refused and enforcement action be taken.

Please pass a copy of this letter to the Conservation Officer so that she may comment generally and on the specific point about an Article IV for Direction upon which we have so far have sought only informal comment.

Yours sincerely



DAVID BEALES BSc DipTP Planning Consultant to Bexhill Heritage