

# Bexhill Heritage

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Caring for Bexhill's past,  
present and future.

30/01/21

## **Clavering Walk, Bexhill. Reserved Matters application RR/20/2260 pursuant to RR/2018/3127. Safeguarding the Ancient Monument**

For the attention of Jeff Pyrah

Dear Mr. Pyrah

I write on behalf of the Committee of Bexhill Heritage. The purpose of this letter is to object to a currently unresolved but crucial aspect of this matter, to explain the reasons for this objection and to offer a solution which should satisfy all parties.

### Objection

This, apart from our solution, was explained at the Local Hearing and concerns the risks arising from the development to the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), Cooden Moat which lies immediately adjacent to the area to be developed. We repeat and augment the reasons below, then offer a solution.

### Reasons for Objection

By way of introduction it should be said that the site of the Manor House on the "island" nor the semi-dry moat have ever been the subject of detailed archaeological surveys and we would not advocate such. We believe that archaeological investigation by excavation should be left where possible for future generations. The SAM has not been damaged over recent generations as it is not adjacent to dense modern housing development, and together with adjacent land it has become increasingly overgrown which has served to deter unauthorised activity. It has lain quietly undisturbed known largely to local walkers and dog exercisers using the adjacent footpath.

We firmly believe that this situation will drastically change and for the worse when the development is occupied, bringing as it will some 200 new residents adjacent for whom the site will be a natural focus of interest. From the outset adults and children will enter the SAM inevitably treading down the vegetation on the "island" and around. With ground cover disappearing possibly assisted by cutting back vegetation on the "island" and adjacent land will be subject to:-

1. Damaging works by metal detectorists who will dig to investigate any response on their detector. Naturally there is the possibility of "nighthawking" here.
2. Damage and erosion by nearby new residents who may dig randomly for anything they think may be there e.g. coins, potsherds, bricks, tiles, "hoards".
3. Damage and erosion by incursions by people from further away who may learn of a "find", even a small one, through social media and visit out of curiosity.
4. Damage and erosion by cycle cross adventurers' to whom the moat and island would be a challenge and a draw especially if published on social media sites.

5. Damage and erosion by motocross bikes drawn by the challenge of the WW2 concrete blocks, the moat and island.
6. Erosion simply by walkers and dog walkers, curious and interested, walking on the island.
7. Damage to the stratigraphy of the organic deposits in the moat and across the site of the building which otherwise could help our understanding of the function of the house in relation to the surrounding land.

As we have said, the site is not subject to these problems at the moment because of its quiet and screened location, both these elements will entirely change as a consequence of the development. No one has suggested a convincing means of protecting the SAM without compromising its value as an amenity feature and an educational resource. We agree with Historic England's view that, even if it could be achieved, restricting access to the SAM is not in keeping with its designation to ensure its preservation for the contribution it can bring to the quality of life of existing and future generations as set out in the NPPF para 184. Historic England's letter of 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 is very clear on this and other matters. What is not clear is how they would seek to successfully protect it.

#### Suggested Solution

In order to avoid all the problems envisaged above, we propose a solution which will prevent damage to the Heritage asset and will not in itself create any damage to the asset viz-

**A double layer of chain linked mesh should be laid across the site including the moat.**

This will be impossible to put a spade or pick through.

It will negate the use of detectors.

It will not in itself damage the Monument.

It will be safe to walk or even play on.

It will disappear from sight when the vegetation grows back through.

It will need no maintenance.

It will be easy to modify should a professional archaeological dig ever be authorised.

It should be inexpensive to install.

We hope this proposal commends itself to you; Members; Historic England and the developers, Bellway and that you can successfully take it forward.

Best regards



David Beales Bsc. Dip.T.P. Consultant Bexhill Heritage

Cc Members of Planning Committee, Local Members, Historic England.