

# Bexhill Heritage

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Caring for Bexhill's past,  
present and future.

16<sup>th</sup> February 2021 For the attention of Tim Hickling

Dear Mr. Hickling

**Beulah Baptist Church, Buckhurst Rd, Bexhill, Proposed Demolition of Existing Church/Sanctuary & Adjoining Hall and construction of New Church and community Centre and Other Works.**  
**Application No. RR/2020/2418**

This has been carefully considered by a meeting of the Committee of Bexhill Heritage and we have concluded that we must oppose it. The main reason is that we think the principal existing building on the site, the church /sanctuary is far too important to see demolished.

You will recollect that in 2018 we urged the Council to seek the listing of the building, a request you put forward on behalf of the Council, rejected by Historic England. We are still of the view that this building, the most prominent and most striking in the surrounding townscape should be retained. Our correspondence on the listing can be found on our web site at "planning correspondence". There you will see our view summarized in our letter of 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 where we described it as a "*distinctive, well-mannered and graceful piece of architecture with much attractive detailing and finely proportioned stained glass windows. Whilst somewhat compromised by C20 additions it transcends these convincingly*". The letter of rejection from Historic England opens with a paragraph which includes the words "discussions are in place.. for the part retention, remodelling and extension of the existing church". We wonder whether this impression somewhat misled Historic England. Such scheme is not before you as it proposes total demolition of the church not part retention.

Having said that we would be prepared to see the rest of the site including the Clifford Hall redeveloped if this proved the key to the retention of the church/sanctuary we seek. We would prefer to see implemented what the applicants list as option 01. This was a solution proffered by Rother District Council during pre-application discussions in August 2018 with your officers – in addition to retaining the church/sanctuary this also retained the Clifford Hall. Between that and our view that the Clifford Hall could go if it were helpful as a route to retaining the church/sanctuary, there are no doubt other variations worth exploring.

Turning now to the design proposed in the application we find this totally unacceptable here. The height and massing of the building is appropriate. There is nothing else in the design which is acceptable.

The problem is that it bears no relationship to the architecture of the town and the predominant aspects of the townscape in the vicinity.

Despite our constitutional objective to help guard our Victorian and Edwardian legacy we do not rule out the occasional insertion of outstanding modern architecture within it. The application does not match the "outstanding" proviso, indeed our view is that it falls woefully short. It is in its own way

competent but a design which is simply not good enough here, on a prominent corner in a position very close to the town centre.

Apart from the lack of care and respect for its surroundings, some of our specific criticisms are, on the Buckhurst Road frontage –

- The large unbroken glass area on the face is unrelated to anything found elsewhere in or near the town centre except on the De la Warr pavilion an outstanding “one-off” not set within the historic grain of the town.
- The lack of a clearly and wholly visible pitched roof is at odds with its surroundings.
- The stair tower design is an artifice also at odds with its surroundings.
- Even the two car parking spaces, set within a retaining wall are not appropriate here.

The Clifford Road frontage –

- This also lacks a significant pitched roof.
- The façade design lacks clarity and cohesion.
- The spandrel panels, whether they be four or seven in number will be prominent and not likely to grace the building.
- The porches are features which bear no visual relationship to anything found in the area.

If the building is to be modern in design it should at least match the quality of that existing. The plans tell us that the scheme signally fails to do this.

We think the scheme does not accord with relevant policies in the Local Plan. We draw your attention particularly to policy EN2 “Stewardship of the Historic Built Environment” which states inter alia-

“Development affecting the historic built environment ..... will be required to:

- (i) Reinforce the special character of the district’s historic settlements, including villages, towns and suburbs through siting, scale, form and **design**”.  
and policy EN3 “Design Quality” which states inter alia –

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

Contributing positively to the character of the site and surroundings.....

- (i) Demonstrating robust design solutions tested against the following Key Design Principles as appropriate tailored to a thorough and empathetic understanding of the particular site and context:
  - (f) Design in Context. (Understanding & appraisal of site and wider setting ...)
  - (g) Building Appearance & Architectural Quality”.

These elements are further explained in appendix 4 of the Local Plan Core Strategy. Given all the above we hope you will recommend a refusal of the application and move forward to productive discussions with the applicant.

Yours sincerely

*David Beales* BSc Dip.T.P. Planning Consultant to Bexhill Heritage

*Raymond Konyn* Chairman, Trustee Founder Member Bexhill Heritage

