

## **Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society**

**Rother Local Plan 2020-2040  
Draft (Regulation 18) Version  
April 2024**

The Society appreciates that Heritage has been identified to play a part in the plan and we would like to comment as follows:-

Re: **What will the Local Plan deliver 1.6**, we welcome “protecting the special landscapes, habitats and heritage of the district.”.

Re: **5. Development Strategy and Principles** and **8. Housing**, we did not readily find a reference to Conservation Areas as part of any considerations applied in planning or decision making although these are mentioned in the Supporting Evidence Base Documents (HELAA Part 2).

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Re: **Vision, Overall Priorities and Objectives**

We welcome the reference to “the confines of the district’s .....built heritage”.

Re: **Proposed Policy LWL7: Streets For All**

### **i) Design Speed of New Streets**

There is no mention of the impact of the increase in heavy traffic on the structures of listed buildings, such as the cluster found in Bexhill Old Town. Many heritage buildings do not have the sort of foundations stipulated in new builds and some have none at all. Lorries routinely ignore weight restrictions on Chantry Lane, for example, and continue along the High Street causing historic buildings to literally shake. Electric vehicles are to be welcomed, but are heavier than non-electric owing to the weight of the batteries, so this problem is likely to increase in the future. The 20mph speed limit would be helpful, but steps should also be taken to encourage drivers to use other routes rather than making Bexhill Old Town a rat run. This problem has been exacerbated since the link road was opened in December 2015 and will probably become much worse with the proposed development to the north of Bexhill. Church Street is also very vulnerable particularly as it is currently the only single file route to a large care home used frequently by delivery lorries as well as other traffic. Consideration should perhaps be given to providing access by another route.

### **ii) Shared Streets**

If the traffic flow were to be re-designed so that Chantry Lane and the High Street became one way, it would allow for a pedestrian walkway from the High Street direct to Bexhill hospital. At present pedestrians are re-routed around the back of St Peter’s Church from the High Street on to Chantry Lane – many patients arrive here on public transport with no idea where to go and take their lives in their hands trying to walk down the traffic only section of Chantry Lane.

### **v) Tree Lined Streets**

This is a welcome initiative – particularly for Bexhill Old Town which had a celebrated walnut tree that was once part of the street scene, but perhaps the only way to find space to plant trees would be to narrow the High Street into single lane traffic only as suggested above.

Re: **Proposed Policy HER1: Heritage Management**

**12.1** and

**12.7** There is no mention of the importance of the heritage which is to be found within Bexhill Old Town, only “the Victorian and Edwardian seaside town of Bexhill-on-Sea” and that “the coastal resort town of Bexhill-on-Sea has a rich heritage of late Victorian and Edwardian villa architecture.” This omission should be corrected given the amount of listed buildings and other important sites within this small Old Town area which dates from AD772.

**12.18** While low and zero carbon technologies (LZC) are to be welcomed, many owners of heritage buildings would appreciate financial incentives to help modernise these buildings without losing any of their unique character – repairs to listed buildings are no longer VAT exempt and Rother District Council should look for ways of bridging that gap when urging LZC improvements.

We would also draw your attention to the Historic Character Assessment Report on Bexhill of 2008, part of the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey, which provides much historic and recent detail and describes the Old Town as having an **Historic Urban Character Area** with a “**High vulnerability**”.