

**BEXHILL TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA – WINDOWS TECHNICAL
ADVICE NOTE TASK AND FINISH GROUP****Terms of Reference**

- Aims and Origin** - Most of Bexhill town centre was built between 1895 and 1905 and because of this short building period the architecture is particularly homogenous.

The quality and character of its late Victorian/Edwardian architecture was recognised in 1992 through the designation of the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area. This designation, made under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, bestows a statutory duty on the Local Planning Authority to pay special attention, in exercising planning functions, to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

Recently, an argument has been made that the requirement to protect or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area hinders investment, with window replacement being an issue raised through a number of planning applications.

A technical advice note (TAN) was drafted to provide advice to developers and decision-makers on how the Council's adopted planning policies should be applied to planning applications for alterations to, or replacement of, windows within the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area. It does not, and cannot, set new planning policy. It presents a series of scenarios to increase understanding of how planning applications would be considered in four generic situations.

On considering the draft TAN, on 29 September 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that a Task and Finish Group be set up to consider the draft TAN.

Scope

To consider:

- a) National legislation regarding conservation areas.
- b) The information and guidance provided in the draft technical advice note.
- c) What can be done to support business and investment in Bexhill town centre without damaging or devaluing

the conservation area.

- Approach**
- a) Introductory presentation of draft TAN by Rother planning officers.
 - b) Review national legislation relating to conservation areas.
 - c) Review previous documents and initiatives¹ relating to the Town Centre Conservation Area, including its designation, policy and guidance.
Receive a view from local businesses and Bexhill Heritage.
 - e) Receive the advice of historic building experts – including Rother planning officers, Historic England and independent professionals in relation Conservation Areas.
 - f) Peer review of guidance produced by other LPAs on this subject.
 - g) Consider the pros and cons of a TAN in relation to alterations or replacement to windows, and if a TAN is supported, recommend any amendments to the TAN that the group considers appropriate based on the information it has received.
 - h) Consider initiatives to support businesses and residents and the conservation area.
- Desired Outcomes**
- a) An understanding of Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area, the legislation related to this designation, the benefits of such a designation, and the impact on business and residents.
 - b) Analysis of the draft TAN, including recommendations for any proposed amendments to the technical advice note that the group considers appropriate, along with other initiatives that would enhance the town centre's commercial vitality, reduce levels of deprivation, and enhance the quality of its built environment.
- Timescale**
- A full day exploratory meeting to be held January/February 2023.
 - Analysis, report writing and recommendations – February 2023.

¹ Including:

- A three year programme (2002-2005) of grant aid funded by the Council and English Heritage provided assistance to repair buildings in the town centre's commercial streets and restore lost character (the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme – HERS).
- A Conservation Area Appraisal, published in 2004.
- The Bexhill-on-Sea Town Centre Conservation Area: Shopfronts + Signage Guidance, published in 2006.
- A 'Strategy for Bexhill Town Centre, which considered the inter-relationships of conservation and development factors, published in 2013.

- Report back to OSC – March 2023.
- Membership**
 - Five Non-Executive Councillors as nominated by the Committee (not necessarily Members of the OSC).
- Officer Lead**
 - Jeff Pyrah – Planning Policy Manager