Bexhill

Historic Character Assessment Report

October 2008

Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)

Roland B Harris

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in association with Rother District Council

west sussex county council

East Sussex County Council

Brighton & Hove

ENGLISH HERITAGE

The Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (Sussex EUS) is a study of 41 towns undertaken between 2004 and 2009 by an independent consultant (Dr Roland B Harris, BA DPhil FSA MIFA), supported from January 2008 by a Research Assistant (Elizabeth Ruffell BSc MSc), for East Sussex County Council (ESCC), West Sussex County Council (WSCC), and Brighton and Hove City Council; and was funded by English Heritage.

Guidance and web-sites derived from the historic town studies will be, or have been, developed by the local authorities.

All photographs and illustrations are by the author.

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Contents

List of maps, tables and other illustrations 6

1 INTRODUCTION 8

2 SETTING 11

3 HISTORY 13

4 ARCHAEOLOGY 21

5 STATEMENT OF HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER 28

6 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FRAMEWORK 37

7 NOTES 38

List of maps, tables and other illustrations

Fig. 1. Location of Bexhill within Sussex.
Fig. 2. The shore platform at Bexhill beach.
Fig. 3. St Peter's church.
Fig. 4. Early 19th-century warehouse (Quaker's Mill, 1 De La Warr Road).
Fig. 5. Early 19th-century houses at 6-10 Church Street.
Fig. 6. Bexhill central station.
Fig. 7. The Sackville Hotel (now flats).
Fig. 8. The Colonnade.
Fig. 9. St Barnabas, Sea Road.
Fig. 10. Bexhill town hall.
Fig. 11. St Barnabas' girls and infants school (since 1951, the public library), Western Road.
Fig. 12. St Peter's church. Nave looking north.
Fig. 13. Bexhill Manor House: remains of the wall between the service rooms and the hall.
Fig. 14. Saxon grave-cover, St Peter's church.
Fig. 15. Boswell House, 22 High Street: 18th-century façade to possible earlier house.
Fig. 16. 2-3 Church Street.
Fig. 17. Yeakell and Gardner 1778 map (detail).
Fig. 18. Ordnance Survey draft 1806-7 (detail).
Fig. 19. Carlton Court, Newdigate House and Berkeley Mansions, De La Warr Parade.
Fig. 20. Devonshire Road.
Fig. 21. Marina Arcade.
Fig. 22. De La Warr Pavilion, southern stair.
Fig. 23. Bexhill *c.*1805, showing Old Town and adjacent barracks

Table 1. Sussex EUS Historic Character Types
Table 2. Sussex EUS chronology
Table 3. Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Bexhill

Map 1. Extent of Bexhill EUS study area
Map 2. Solid and drift geology with 10m contours
Map 3. Ordnance Survey 1st Series 25" (1873)
Map 4. Historic buildings
Map 5. Period 4 (950-1065)
Map 6. Period 7 (1350-1499)
Map 7. Period 10 (1700-1799)
Map 8. Historic Character Types (2008)
Map 9. Historic Character Type areas showing principal period from which present character is derived

Map 10. Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)
Map 11. Historic Environment Value (HEV)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

This report is an archaeological, historical, and historic urban character assessment of Bexhill. It is part of the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (henceforth Sussex EUS) that examines 41 towns across the ancient county.[1]

The Sussex EUS forms part of a national programme of such surveys initiated by English Heritage in 1992. The national programme is already well underway, with roughly half the English counties having been completed or currently undergoing study.

As the surveys have progressed, the approach has developed. In line with recent surveys, the Sussex EUS includes more modern towns, the main significance of which stems from the 19th and 20th centuries. Another recent innovation is the introduction of the characterization concept, comparable with the map-based techniques adopted by historic landscape characterization. This approach was developed in Lancashire (2000-4), and is further refined in Sussex.

The Sussex EUS has been funded by English Heritage, and supported in kind by the commissioning authorities: East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council. A wide range of stakeholders (including district and borough councils, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) has supported the project.

In West Sussex the Sussex EUS forms part of the *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme*,[2] aiming to provide guidance and advice on the protection and enhancement of all aspects of character in the county. Other historic environment projects come under this umbrella:

• Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Sussex

• Intensive Urban Survey of Chichester and Fishbourne

• Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 Aims

The aim of the Sussex EUS is to deliver a unique and flexible tool to aid the understanding, exploration and management of the historic qualities of 41 of the most significant towns in Sussex with a view to:

• archaeological and historic environment research and management.

• informing strategic and local policy.

• underpinning urban historic land and buildings management and interpretation.

• encouraging the integration of urban historic characterization into the wider process of protecting and enhancing urban character.

1.2.2 Objectives

Key objectives of the project include the:

• synthesis of previous archaeological and historical work.

• creation of a Geographic Information System (GIS) that maps and allows the analysis of archaeological events, monuments and urban plan components using information obtained from a variety of sources.

• analysis of the origins and development of each town by establishing and examining its principal plan components and existing standing structures.

• identification of county-wide Historic Character Types and attribution of the types to different areas within each town.

• preparation of a Statement of Historic Urban Character for each town, to include assessment of archaeological potential and Historic Environment Value.

• identification of gaps in the understanding of the past occupation and historical development of character of each town through the development of a Research Framework.

• advice to local authorities on the development of guidance derived from the town studies.

1.3 Outputs

The principal outputs of the project comprise:

• Historic character assessment reports. Documents (of which this is one) that, separately for each town, summarize the setting and pre-urban activity; synthesize current archaeological and historical research; describe the development from origins to the present day; assess the surviving historic character and historic environment value; and set out a framework for future research on the historic environment of the towns.

• Geographical Information System (GIS) for the historic environment of each town. The GIS underpins the analysis and mapping of the town

reports, and is available to local authorities as a unique tool to support their decision making. The EUS-generated GIS data includes historic buildings and archaeological data, and mapping of areas for which Historic Character Type, historic land use, and Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined. The GIS data will be maintained and updated by the West Sussex County Council *Sites & Monuments Record* (SMR) and the East Sussex County Council *Historic Environment Record* (HER).

• Informing historic environment management guidance specific to each local planning authority, for the 41 EUS towns and Winchelsea, produced under the new Local Development Frameworks, and subject to formal consultation procedures.

• Background papers for the Sussex EUS project. Documents that include the project design, a summary of the methodology and an overall bibliography.

1.4 The structure of this report

1.4.1 The Setting

This introductory section describes the topography, geology, communications, and pre-urban archaeology of the town.

1.4.2 History

The history of Bexhill in this report can be a brief summary only. It aims to synthesize published research, and to provide a chronological overview of the development of the town as seen from documentary sources. The focus is placed on those matters – such as origins, economy, trade and institutions – that are most closely related to the urban historic environment today.

1.4.3 Archaeology

The archaeology section of this report draws on published and unpublished reports of excavations, archaeological assessments, and records of finds. This section also includes analysis of historic buildings (listed and non-listed) and the topography, the latter drawing on large-scale maps of Bexhill from *c.*1805 onwards. Again, this section follows a chronological structure, and focuses on aspects of the material evidence of the town's past that relate most closely to the historic environment today.

1.4.4 Statement of Historic Urban Character

Whereas sections on history and archaeology (above) explore the development of Bexhill over time, this part of the report considers and defines the physical evidence of the past in today's townscape. It does this by means of a character-based approach, operating at three different scales: areas of common Historic Character Type; larger and topographically familiar Historic Urban Character Areas; and the whole town. Assessment is made of the Historic Environment Value of each of the Historic Urban Character Areas, taking account of the archaeological potential.

1.5 Principal sources

Bexhill has been the subject of significant historical interest, but only limited archaeological investigation. The principal sources drawn on during the writing of this report are listed below. Many other sources have been used too, and full references have been given by use of endnotes.

1.5.1 History

There is no authoritative historical study of Bexhill from its medieval origins onwards, although the development of the seaside resort of Bexhill-on-Sea has been more thoroughly explored in a number of works of which the most notable is that by **Leonard Bartley**.[3]

1.5.2 Archaeology

There have been no substantial excavations within the historic core of Bexhill. Minor evaluations and watching briefs (mostly with largely negative results) have been undertaken, however, and comprise those at **Barnhorne Road** (2005[4]), **Terminus Avenue** (2006[5]), **Belle Hill** (2006[6]), **Church Street** (2006[7]), and **Buckhurst Road** (2007[8]).

The **East Sussex Historic Environment Record** (HER) database has been invaluable for identifying unpublished sites, and for providing the pre-urban archaeological context.

1.5.3 Historic buildings

No systematic analysis of the historic buildings of Eastbourne has been undertaken. However, **David** and **Barbara Martin** have undertaken detailed surveys of the Old Manor House (following demolition in 1968, but studying the ruins and using pre-demolition sources);[9] Lychgate, 5 Church Street;[10] and Rimswell Cottage, Church Street.[11]

English Heritage's statutory list of historic buildings is also of use, though many of the descriptions date from the late 1940s and mid-1970s and were necessarily produced without internal inspection. Very limited fieldwork only was possible during this assessment and focused on correcting dating derived from such sources, identifying hitherto ignored buildings of historic interest, and re-evaluating the dating and function of key buildings and monuments.

1.5.4 Geology and topography

The contextual discussion of the solid and drift geology has principally derived from 1:50,000 British Geological Survey digital data. Ordnance Survey Historic 25" maps for Epochs 1-4 (1873 onwards) have proved invaluable, especially as these have been used in digital form, allowing overlaying with each other and with other data. A map of *c.*1805 (*East Sussex Record Office* AMS 5819) captures pre-railway and pre-resort Bexhill at a large scale, and shows details of the extensive barracks in existence at this time. This has been digitized and rectified to fit the National Grid to allow comparison with other maps and data. Vertical air photo coverage of 2006 provides a useful snapshot in time. All analysis and maps utilize the most recent large-scale Ordnance Survey mapping (digital MasterMap data).

1.6 Area covered by the report

The Sussex EUS assessment of Bexhill covers the historic core of the town as defined *c.*1900. Since the town at this date was still polyfocal, comprising Bexhill itself (i.e. Old Town) and the focus of the post-1880 resort, the EUS study area inevitably includes areas that remained undeveloped in 1875, most significantly that area on the west and south-west of Old Town.

Bexhill is one of four towns in Rother District that have assessments such as this. The others are Battle, Robertsbridge and Rye (Winchelsea having been the subject of a more intensive study).

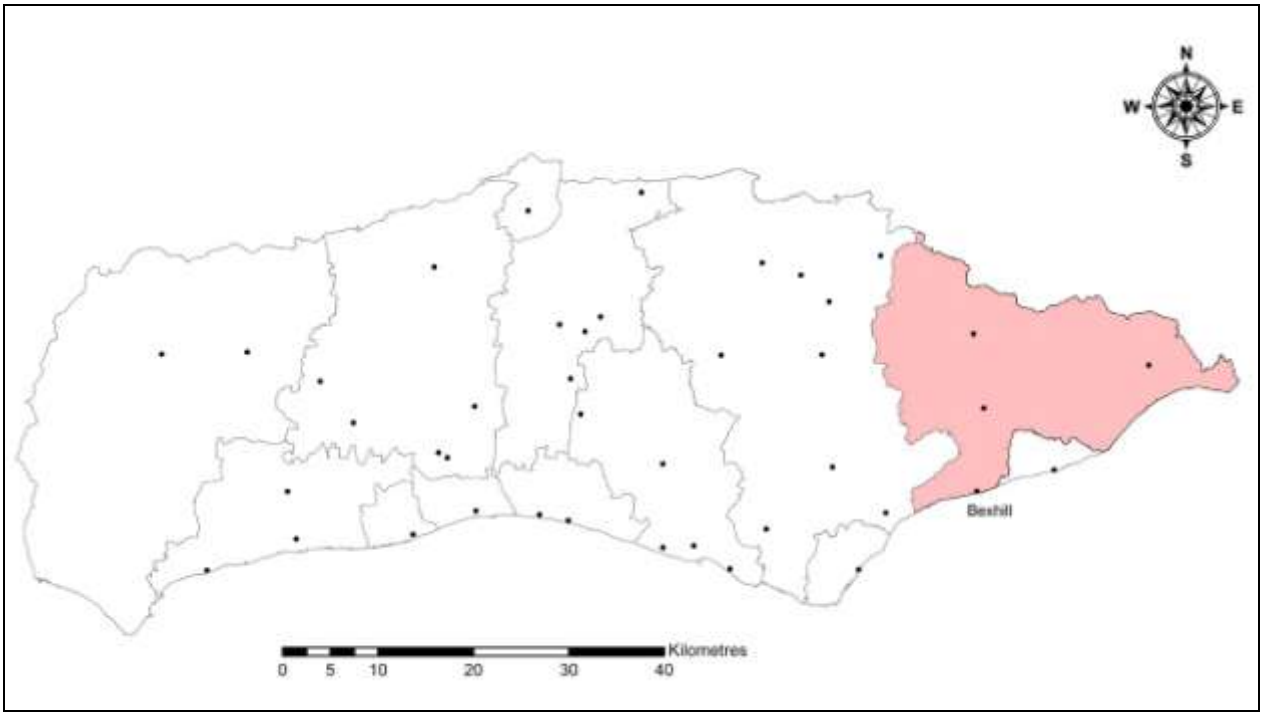

Fig. 1. Location of Bexhill within Sussex. Rother District is highlighted and points locate the 41 Sussex EUS towns.

2 THE SETTING

Fig. 2. The shore platform at Bexhill beach.

2.1 Topography (Map 2)

The medieval village of Bexhill (i.e. Old Town) is located on a hill top on the edge of the High Weald, *c.*1km inland from the shore. The hill at Bexhill is minor, rising to *c.*46m OD at the parish church of St Peter, and forms the southern end of an area of higher land between Combe Haven valley on the east and Pevensey Levels on the west: the higher land rises towards Catsfield and Battle, where it joins the Battle Ridge (a secondary ridge of the High Weald). The late 19th and 20th-century suburbs surround the earlier village, but the core of the resort occupies the area between Old Town and the seafront, with areas such as Egerton Park lying as low as *c.*4m OD. The promenade is at *c.*6.5-7.0m OD, and provides access to a shingle beach: starting *c.*675m east of the EUS study area, at Galley Hill, low cliffs rise above the beach, while *c.*530m to the west of the EUS study area low cliffs are found at South Cliff.

Off-shore contours measured by bathymetric survey are steeply sloped in the Bexhill area and are not likely to be a product of erosion. This suggests, despite the rate of erosion in modern times, that the prehistoric coast was within 1km or so of that today.[12]

The centre of the modern town is in the area bounded by Sackville Road, Buckhurst Road, Sea Road and the Seafront. Suburbs extend inland *c.*3km to the north of Sidley, and the built-up seafront extends for *c.*6.2km: on the east side there is only a small gap of *c.*250m between this and the western limit of the St Leonards and Hastings built-up area..

The town lies near the centre of Bexhill Civil Parish (which comprises the historic parish), although, it being a seaside town, hard against the coastal boundary.

2.2 Geology (Map 2)

2.2.1 Solid geology

Along with the whole of Sussex, the rocks in the vicinity of Bexhill are sedimentary. Descending the Downs and crossing the Low Weald to the High Weald, where Bexhill is located, the rocks get progressively older. The historic village and most of the resort lie over the sandstones, siltstones and mudstones (commonly clays) of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation (Lower Cretaceous), although *c.*200m north-east of Old Town this gives way to the sandstones, siltstones and mudstones of the Ashdown Formation (Lower Cretaceous), and, beyond this (i.e. under the extreme north-east suburbs of Bexhill) the sandstones and mudstones of the Wadhurst Clay (Lower Cretaceous).

2.2.2 Drift Geology

The drift geology of the Bexhill area shows alluvium marking the lower reaches of the former stream (The Pell) from Sidley, via Belle Hill, to the coast at what is now Egerton Park. In the 19th century there were lagoons where this stream debouched (extending eastwards towards the later De La Warr Pavilion site), and just east and west of the EUS study area: further west, at Veness Gap, the Ordnance Survey surveyors' draft of 1806-7 shows a continuous waterway parallel to the coastline extending *c.*3.3km westwards toward Pevensey Sluice. The watercourse and lagoons appear to have been the product of longshore drift deflecting the stream eastwards behind a shingle barrier, but most of this has been eroded during the 19th century and lies below the current high water mark. The present shoreline comprises beach and storm beach deposits, with underlying rocks

of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation forming a visible shore platform.

2.3 Communications

2.3.1 Water

Despite its coastal location. Bexhill did not develop as a port or landing place in the late Saxon period, but rather as a minster and agricultural settlement (see sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3). The proximity of the sea was fundamental to the development of resort in the 19th century, but even during this period usage of the sea for transport was very limited: there was, however, a small beached-based fishing industry (see section 3.3.1).

2.3.2 Road

Bexhill lies on the A259 (the main Hastings-Brighton road). This avoids the seafront area of the resort and bypasses historic Old Town on its north side (King Offa Way). The principal road inland is the A269 to Ninfield, leading to Battle (and the A21 London road) and Herstmonceux (thence Hailsham and the A22 London road).

No roads in the immediate area were turnpiked.

2.3.3 Railway

The London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) opened a line from Lewes to St Leonards in 1846: this was followed by the Ashford to St Leonard's line of the South Eastern Railway in 1851, giving a connection to Hastings.[13] A branch line opened in 1902, connecting Bexhill to the London-Hastings line at Crowhurst. The branch line – which was provided with a terminus at Bexhill West Station – closed in 1964.[14] The main line survives and remains in frequent use.

2.4 Evidence for pre-urban activity

2.4.1 Prehistoric

One excavation has produced evidence of prehistoric archaeology:

• 49 Terminus Avenue, Bexhill – trial excavations in advance of creation of a vegetable patch in 2005 recovered fire-fractured flint, and Mesolithic (10000 BC to 4001 BC), Neolithic (4000 BC to 2351 BC) and Bronze Age (2350 BC to 701 BC) worked flints, together with Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery sherds. These finds suggest Mesolithic seasonal activity, with a possible Bronze Age settlement in the vicinity.[15]

Elsewhere in or near the EUS study area, there have been prehistoric find spots:

• Bexhill area – Mesolithic tranchet axe found [HER reference: MES129].

• Former Bexhill West railway station, Terminus Road – Neolithic scrapers and flint wasters found in former allotments [HER reference: MES69].

• Collington Wood – Bronze Age small barbed and tanged arrowhead found in a mole-hill in May 1934 [HER reference: MES64].

• Bexhill Down – Bronze Age broken barbed and tanged flint arrowhead was found exposed on the surface of the ground after a gorse fire in *c.*1926 [HER reference: MES65].

2.4.2 Romano-British

Although no Romano-British finds or features have been found through controlled excavation in the town, there have been numerous discoveries of Roman ironworkings in the area. There are five known bloomery sites of this period within the parish.[16] Outside the EUS study area there has been one local Roman-British find:

• Wickham Road – Roman (43 AD to 409 AD) carved pink granite head found at a depth of *c.*1m in 1982, possibly a representation of the god Dis Pater [HER reference: MES124].

2.4.3 Early Anglo-Saxon

There have been no Early Anglo-Saxon finds in or near the EUS study area.

2.4.4 Implications of pre-urban archaeology

The implications from all the pre-urban finds are clear: although the EUS study area and its immediate vicinity lacks substantial controlled excavations, considerable evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British occupation in the area has been found and should be anticipated in any archaeological excavations in Bexhill.

3 HISTORY

3.1 Origins: 11th-16th centuries

3.1.1 Place-name

The name *Bexhill* is likely to relate to the area and to predate any nucleated settlement. The probable Old English form has been identified as *byxe lēah* meaning 'box-tree clearing', and dates back to at least 772.[17]

Fig. 3. St Peter's church.

3.1.2 Church

The first reference to a church is in a charter of Offa, which records the foundation of a minster (a mother church serving a *parochia* from which developed several later parishes) at Bexhill in 772. Offa's grant was of eight hides of land to enable Bishop Oswald to found a minster, with the land reverting to the bishopric of Selsey (i.e. that transferred to Chichester in 1075) on Oswald's death. Although only known through a chartulary compiled at Canterbury in the 13th century, the essential details relating to the foundation are likely to be genuine. Offa's initial endowment was added to so that by 1066 Bexhill was a substantial episcopal estate of 20 hides.[18] Two churches are recorded for Bexhill in Domesday Book (1086), the second one probably being that at Northeye (which had declined by 1300).[19]

The well endowed Saxon minster at Bexhill was annexed to the College of St Mary's, next to the castle at Hastings, shortly after the Norman Conquest, and certainly by 1086: the new college succeeded the Saxon minster as the main ecclesiastical centre in the area. In the late 12th century, however, payments by Ninfield and Hooe to Bexhill church showed that, despite annexation by the Count of Eu and subsequent repossession by the bishop (in 1148), vestiges of its once extensive *parochia* still survived.[20]

A vicarage was ordained before 1246 and a chantry (the Batisford Chantry) was created within the church in 1453 (suppressed 1548).[21]

3.1.3 Medieval village

Although now a coastal town, medieval Bexhill lay slightly inland and was not on a river (see section 2.1). It did not develop as a landing place or port, although Bulverhythe (2.25km to the east) had developed as such by the 11th century[22] and became a member of the Cinque Ports, as did Northeye (6km to the west, but within Bexhill parish).[23] Although the distribution of the 53 villagers and 27 cottagers in the Domesday Book entry for the extensive area of Bexhill manor is unclear, the numbers are consistent with the presence of a village rather than anything larger: although the manor was 'waste' after the Norman Conquest, by 1086 it had recovered to near its 1066 value.

Bexhill did not acquire market rights,[24] and, although there has been little study of the documentary history of the medieval settlement, it is clear that throughout the period it was a village located near its church. There were 29 taxpayers in the hundred of Bexhill (which contained only the parish of Bexhill) in 1296, suggesting a population of perhaps around 145. In 1327 this had risen to 46 taxpayers and to 52 taxpayers in 1352.[25] This increased further to 98 taxpayers in 1524.[26]

After the interlude of being held by the Counts of Eu (see above), the manor of Bexhill remained with the bishops of Chichester until 1561.[27]

3.2 The village *c.*1540-1845

3.2.1 Economic history

The post-medieval history of Bexhill is largely one of a village until the development of the

seaside resort in the second half of the 19th century (see section 3.3.1).

The population in Bexhill parish fell from around 480 in 1524 to around 390 in 1676, rising to around 450 in 1724.[28]

A school was established in 1597 in the former chantry chapel of the church.[29] The subsequent history of this school is obscure, although a schoolmaster was appointed in 1775.[30]

Although not shown at all on a survey of the defences of the Sussex coast in 1587, in response to the Spanish threat,[31] Bexhill was the location of a beacon in 1595.[32]

An indication of the small scale of 17th-century Bexhill and its lack of passing trade is seen its minimal provision for guest beds and stablings at its inns recorded in a survey of 1686,[33] and its roads were ignored in the flurry of turnpike construction in the 18th and 19th centuries.[34]

Nonetheless, the rise in population in the 18th century (by 1801 it was 1,091) and the number of buildings of this period (see below, section 4.2.1), are indications of changing fortunes. The Bell Hotel is recorded from 1751 and gained its assembly room in the 18th century: although Bexhill was not on a major coaching route, the Bell was the main inn at Bexhill in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and provided a staging post for coaches to Brighton and Hastings.[35]

The advent of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815) heralded considerable change at Bexhill. There were no barracks in Sussex before 1793,[36] and in 1794 Bexhill Common was one of the locations chosen for tented camps that sprang up along the coast.[37] Barracks quickly followed and were built at Bexhill in 1798 to accommodate 500 infantry and 20 cavalry. Despite the threat of invasion reducing by 1800, barracks for 900 infantry and 50 horses were maintained and then, with the renewed fear from 1803, larger barracks (comprising small huts thatched with heather) were built at Bexhill in 1804 to accommodate 3,000 men of the King's German Legion.[38] Threat of invasion also saw the creation of a chain of Martello towers along the south and east coasts of England – a decision apparently made following robust defence of a stone tower at Mortella Point, Corsica, against a Royal Navy attack in 1793-4.[39] The long parish boundary of Bexhill included 12 such towers, of which three were located within the EUS study area (Nos. 45-7):[40] the easternmost (No. 45: *c.*150m south-east of the later Sackville Hotel) had been lost to coastal erosion in 1822; the central one (No. 46: on the northern edge of the

Fig. 4. Early 19th-century warehouse (Quaker's Mill, 1 De La Warr Road), with the rebuilt Bell Hotel beyond.

later Colonnade) was demolished in 1866; and the westernmost tower (No. 47: *c.*50m south of the promenade, opposite Normandy Court, West Parade) was lost in 1859.[41]

The impact of the barracks on Bexhill appears to have been considerable and outlasted the departure of the military (the King's German Legion left Bexhill in 1814, the barracks began to be dismantled in 1815, and the site was sold in 1822[42]). The population (which excluded the militia) rose sharply from 1,091 in 1810 to 1,627 in 1811, then 1,907 in 1821. Thereafter the population stayed stable until the 1840s, being 1,916 in 1841. That this apparent stability masked emigration is evident from the fact that the first five months of 1841, for example, saw 25 people emigrate from the parish.[43]

Construction of wells for both the Martello towers and the barracks at Bexhill in 1804-5 exposed pieces of lignite, which were mistaken for true coal. Costly attempts were made to locate the supposed coal seam between 1805 and 1811 – despite the strong advice from the mineral surveyor John Farey as to the stratigraphic impossibility – and, inevitably, the scheme ended in failure.[44]

Fig. 5. Early 19th-century houses at 6-10 Church Street.

Although without a harbour, cargoes are recorded as being landed at Bexhill beach in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These cargoes included delivery of chalk extracted from cliffs (principally Beachy Head) to lime kilns at Bexhill. In the 1830s Bexhill was in receipt of several cargoes a year, which, in 1830, included 1,400 tons of coal in 18 cargoes.[45] Smuggling was a well recorded activity in the Bexhill area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1791 a 'riding officer' was based at Bexhill, but it was only in 1831, when the Coastguard replaced the naval forces of the Coast Blockade, that Bexhill gained a permanent preventive presence. Cottages for living quarters and watch-rooms and store-rooms were erected in 1832, and two of the redundant Martello towers were in use as coastguard stations by 1839.[46]

A parish workhouse was built on Bexhill Down, just west of the village, in 1755.[47] As a result of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, Bexhill became part of Battle Union (where a new workhouse was built in 1840).[48]

3.2.2 Church and religion

The parish church continued in use throughout this period. In the 18th century a gallery was added to the west end.[49]

The influx of troops during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars saw an increase in demand for burials, which was met by provision of a new burial ground in Barrack Road. With troops withdrawn, this was handed over to the parish church in 1815.[50]

In the national religious census of 1676, 300 adult conformists (and no nonconformists) were recorded.[51] Bishop Bowers' diocesan survey of 1724 records that there were 100 families one of which was Anabaptist.[52] A Particular Baptist chapel at Bexhill was registered in 1786,[53] although its location and later history are obscure. As at Eastbourne, the influx of soldiers to the barracks appears to have provided the impetus for Wesleyan Methodists who had established themselves in Bexhill by 1808, when a place of worship was registered: in 1809, 18 members at Bexhill were soldiers.[54] Initially meetings were held in a cottage near the barracks, then in a stable loft until the Belle Hill chapel was built in 1825 (closed 1938).[55]

3.3 The resort: *c.*1845-2008

3.3.1 Economic history

Fig. 6. Bexhill central station.

Although expanding and with some resort-like attributes (such as the small theatre and

assembly room, and a few lodging houses), Bexhill in 1845 was still very much a village. The arrival of the railway in 1846, however, set the stage for change. The London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) built the railway as a line from Lewes to St Leonards in 1846, with the opening of the Ashford to St Leonard's line by the South Eastern Railway in 1851 completing the connection to Hastings.[56] At Bexhill, the line passed between the village and the coast and, crucially, was provided with a small station. Given the main line railway, the coastal location, and the success of other Sussex seaside resorts, speculative development at Bexhill was to be expected, with an initial scheme proposed by the owners of the Pages estate, west of Bexhill. Detailed plans of 1863 show a mix of semi-detached and detached houses north of the railway and a small seafront development at South Cliff, but beyond the setting out of Collington Rise and now lost streets to the east (recorded on the 1873 Ordnance Survey map), the scheme failed to materialize.[57] A second plan, by a consortium of Hastings businessmen was more successful, with St James' Road and St John's Road established and set out with plots for development by 1873.[58] The development was small, however, and located 800m north of the medieval village, rather than towards the sea and station and, even with other smaller scale development, Bexhill had changed little from its pre-railway form: between 1841 and 1881 the population had risen from 1,931 to 2,452, only representing 62% of the growth seen in the previous 40 years.

The 1880s saw radical change and the emergence of the new seaside resort at Bexhill. Local landowner Samuel Scrivens sold off farmland which allowed the development of the London Road area between Belle Hill and the later town hall (adjacent to the first station at Bexhill). To the north of Belle Hill new development began to link up with that at St James's Road and St John's Road. However, it was the direct involvement of the 7th Earl De La Warr, the main landowner at Bexhill, that gave development real impetus. Sale of De La Warr land in 1880 for housing in Hastings Road followed the earlier pattern of a scatter of spacious villas away from the coast, but this was quickly followed by more concerted planning. A scheme was drawn up by the De La Warr Estate in 1882 showing denser housing south of the railway, with large detached villas in spacious grounds to the north, all with a focus east of the medieval village. Implementation of the plan began with works that included construction of a sea wall and esplanade, commencing at the

Fig. 7. The Sackville Hotel (now flats).

Marine cottages (i.e. at modern Sutton Place) in 1883. That the esplanade began from its east end reflects the De La Warr focus on the proposed eastern suburbs, but the actual building – which required speculation by others – tended to the west, where the existing building and station were located.[59]

Although the intended eastwards focus of the resort had failed to come about there was no doubt as to the success of the town and the De La Warr support: from 2,452 in 1881 the population of Bexhill doubled to 5,206 in 1891, more than doubled again to 12,213 in 1901, and, marking a slowing down in expansion in the Edwardian period, in 1911 reached 15,330. A measure of the change was that in the 1890s Bexhill was of sufficient scale to merit investment in a more direct rail link to London than that provided via Lewes, to be achieved by a four mile branch linking the town (from Bexhill West Station in Terminus Road) to the Hastings to London line at Crowhurst: the new line opened in 1902.[60]

The economy of the newly expanded town was focused on its role as a seaside town. Major resort hotels were built along the seafront, mostly on the De La Warr estate, beginning with

Fig. 8. The Colonnade.

the Sackville Hotel in 1890 (which saw the addition of public rooms in 1900), followed by others that included the Marine Hotel in 1895, the Metropole Hotel in 1897-1900, and the Granville Hotel in 1902 (the opening of which was delayed until 1905).[61] Although Bexhill was never to get a pier, the seafront saw the building of the Kursaal (literally, 'cure-hall', the name derived from public buildings at German health resorts) in 1896: this was a pier-like iron-framed building projecting from the promenade over the beach, with a pavilion providing the town's main venue for concerts (demolished 1936). In 1906 a partly covered open-air theatre was constructed in Egerton Park. On the seafront, the Colonnade opened in 1911 as a bandstand and for orchestral concerts.[62]

In 1913 the privately owned promenade of the De La Warr's was purchased by the corporation and the gates removed. This set the town for the post-First World War development of the resort in which the local council – empowered by the Corporations Act of 1923 – took an increasing role. Although plans for widespread redevelopment of the town came to nothing, those for a seafront entertainment hall did, resulting in the construction of the De La Warr Pavilion in 1935, in the central seafront site vacated by the coastguard in 1930. Although the planned swimming pool and the pergola linking the pavilion to the Colonnade were never built, the De La Warr Pavilion was a significant addition to the resort's facilities and, due to its startling modernism, proved an attraction and good advertisement for the resort.[63] The seafront also stimulated a modest and seasonal fishing industry, with 19 fishermen in 1921 operating beach-based boats.[64] A sharp rise in population from 15,330 in 1911 to 20,363 in 1921 was not sustained, with the population reaching 21,229 in 1931. These figures include visitors: for example, the 1921 census on June 19th included nearly 2,750 visitors, which accounted for 13.5% of the total population.[65]

With its lack of manufacturing industries, Bexhill (like nearby Eastbourne) was identified as a safe area at the outbreak of the Second World War and initially received evacuees, with over 700 school children arriving from London. However, with frequent air attacks beginning along the coast in 1940 and increasing threat of invasion the situation changed, and 1,120 local children were evacuated from Bexhill. The 51 bombing raids on Bexhill saw 189 buildings seriously damaged and 21 destroyed. Civilian casualties saw 21 people killed.[66]

Post-war Bexhill saw huge changes in its economy. Although many private schools re-establish themselves in the town after the war (in 1950 Bexhill had 24, compared to Eastbourne's 20, and Hastings and St Leonard's 21[67]) decline set in.[68] More significantly, the seaside resort failed to prosper as it had previously. This is especially evident through the fate of the main seafront hotels: the Marine Hotel was demolished in 1954; the Metropole Hotel was demolished in 1955; the Sackville Hotel closed 1960; and the Granville Hotel closed in 2000 and was demolished in 2003.[69] A further sign of change was the closure of Bexhill West Station and the branch to the London line at Crowhurst in 1964,[70] followed in 1978 by the opening of the Old Town bypass (King Offa Way).[71]

While Bexhill declined as a pleasure – or visitors' – sea resort, it prospered as a residential resort, however, as the population expanded from 25,693 in 1951 to 32,898 in 1971 and 40,495 in 2001. The 1960s was a peak period in construction of new homes, with Bexhill becoming a favoured area for retirement. This included low-density housing on spreading suburbs as well as more centrally located blocks of flats. Bexhill has not seen the large-scale retail developments seen in many town centres, although a Sainsbury's superstore opened in Buckhurst Place in 1976.[72] Traditional retail

businesses have suffered, however, with, for example, the department store of Longley's, Devonshire Road (opened in 1906) closing in 1985.[73]

3.3.2 Church and religion

The rapidly increasing population saw the parish church of St Peter's remodelled and expanded in 1878-9 and again in 1906. Additional provision of Anglican churches was also required: St Mark, Little Common, had built in 1842 (with its own ecclesiastical parish created in 1857); more directly related to the growing town, St Barnabas, Sea Road, was built in 1890-1, to serve its own newly created parish; St Stephen, Down Road, was built as a parish church in 1898-1900; St Andrew, Wickham Avenue, was built as a mission of the church of St Barnabas in 1899-1900 (becoming part of St Augustine's parish when that was created in 1934); All Saints', Sidley, was built in 1909-10 (services having been held in the hamlet from 1865), and became its own parish in 1930; the church of the Good Shepherd, Belle Hill, was built in 1913 over the Malet Memorial Hall (replacing an iron mission hut established in 1885), and is now a restaurant; St Michael and All Angels, Glassenbury Drive was built in 1929-30; and St Augustine, Cooden Drive, was built in 1933-4 to serve a new parish. Demand for burials also outstripped the graveyard at St Peter's and the extension in Barrack Road created for troops *c.*1800 (see section 3.2.2). A new cemetery was opened at Clinch Green in 1901 and the Barracks Road burial ground was closed. The Clinch Green cemetery was extended in 1960.[74]

Provision for Protestant nonconformism and Roman Catholicism also developed in the later 19th century and early 20th century. A Roman Catholic mission was established in Bexhill in 1893, comprising a priest's house and school-church (now a hall) with the present church of St Mary Magdalene built in 1906-7; just outside the town, the Roman Catholic convent of Nazareth House was opened in 1894 as a home for the aged, infirm and orphaned, gaining a chapel in 1911 (closed 2001); St Martha's, Little Common, was built in 1939-40; and Our Lady of the Rosary, Sidley, was completed in 1954.[75] Congregationalist services were held in Bexhill from 1886, with purpose-built Victoria Hall, Victoria Road opening in 1887, succeeded by the adjacent church, which opened in 1897 (now styled St John's United Reformed Church); a Methodist mission opened in 1890 in Station Road, followed by Parkhurst Hall in 1892 and, finally, a church itself in 1894; the Springfield Road Methodist Church was built in 1906-7; a

Fig. 9. St Barnabas, Sea Road.

Baptist chapel was built in Clifford Road in 1896, becoming the church hall when superseded by the adjacent larger Beulah Baptist chapel built in 1897-9; St George's Presbyterian church, Lionel Road and Cantelupe Road, was built in 1901 (now styled Bexhill United Reformed Church); and in 1914 the Salvation Army (who had had a corps in Bexhill from 1892) built its hall in London Road.[76] The First Church of Christ Scientist, Cantelupe Road was built in 1931, but closed in 1995 and was demolished in 2001.[77] Quakers worshipped in Bexhill from 1957, building the Meeting House in Albert Road in 1965.[78]

3.3.3 Urban institutions

The growing town became increasingly unsuited to governance by parish vestry and, stimulated by an outbreak of typhoid in Bexhill in 1880, a local board of health was established in 1884. Essentially concerned with highways and sanitation, the board completed a main drainage system and outfall in 1886. The site for a town hall was acquired by the local board in 1893: this was completed in 1895, in which year the local board became Bexhill Urban Council, in turn became a municipal borough in 1902. Under the Local Government Act 1972, in 1974 Bexhill Borough Council merged with Battle Rural District Council and Rye Borough Council to

Fig. 10. Bexhill town hall.

become Rother District Council, which has its main offices in Bexhill town hall.[79]

Bexhill's first police house – established in the mid-19th century – was located Belle Hill, succeeded in the late 1870s or 1880s by a police station adjacent to the National School in Barrack Road. In turn this was replaced by the combined police station and courthouse that opened in Cantelupe Road in 1903. Court sittings remained under the Hastings divisional bench until Bexhill gained its own petty sessional division in 1929 (with closure of the Cantelupe Road courthouse, Bexhill cases are now held at Hastings).[80]

The transition of the coastguard service from the Board of Customs to the Admiralty in 1856 formalized the change in function from prevention of smuggling to maritime safety. Although the Martello tower on the Horn (i.e. next to the later Colonnade) was demolished in 1866 (see above, section 3.2.1), the coastguard station remained there until the Bexhill coastguard was closed in 1930 (the duties being transferred to Eastbourne and St Leonards).[81]

A National School opened in 1853 in Holliers Hill, immediately north of the former barracks cemetery (closed 1940), with infants accommodated in the Wilson Memorial School in Barrack Road (undated, but in existence by 1873). Other National Schools followed in the hamlets of the large parish, at Little Common (1855: closed 1961) and Sidley (1865: now All Saints C of E Primary School). Expansion of the new resort saw schools built for girls and infants in Barrack Road (1885: now Chantry Community Primary School); St Barnabas' girls and infants school, Western Road (1893: since 1951 the public library); and St Barnabas' boys school, Reginald Road (1898: closed 1956). The Roman Catholic school that was part of the 1893 building next to the later church of St Mary Magdalene (see above section 3.3.2), relocated to a wing of Nazareth House, Hastings Road in 1961, and recently (as St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School) moved to adjacent purpose-built premises. Folllowing Balfour's Education Act 1902, the borough council assumed responsibility for elementary education, building the Down Elementary School (1907, extended in 1912; now King Offa Primary School), which provided for 700 pupils. Secondary education was eventually provided by the building in 1925-6 of the boys and girls grammar schools in Turkey Road, Sidley (merged in 1970, and now Bexhill College – i.e. a sixth form college). Borough re-organization of elementary education saw the construction of a new senior school behind the Down Elementary School, which opened partly in 1941 then fully in 1943. After the war – and the Butler Education Act (1944) – the new school became a secondary modern schools for boys and girls: these amalgamated in 1967, became comprehensive, and the school is now styled Bexhill High. A Roman Catholic secondary school – St Richard's secondary modern, Ashdown Road – opened in 1959, and is now styled St Richard's Catholic College. New primary schools in the post-war period include St Peter and St Paul Church of England Primary School, Buckhurst Road (1956); Sidley Community Primary School, Buxton Drive (1951); Little Common School, Shepherd's Close (1961); and Pebsham Community Primary School (1977).[82]

In common with other fashionable seaside resorts, Bexhill has a long and complex history of private schools, many of which were small and short-lived. It has been estimated that there have been about 180 such schools, but the town has not had a long-lasting public school.[83]

The town did not acquire a hospital until the opening of Bexhill Hospital on Holliers Hill, in 1933.[84] The hospital remains in use, providing outpatients services and day surgery, and there is a health centre on the site.[85]

Early, small-scale and short-lived public libraries began in the porch of St Mary Magdalen's

Fig. 11. St Barnabas' girls and infants school (since 1951, the public library), Western Road.

Roman Catholic church in 1912, but the first borough funded library was that established in the De La Warr Pavilion in 1927. After the Second World War, East Sussex County Council assumed responsibility for the service, in 1951 opening a library within the former); St Barnabas' girls and infants school, Western Road.[86]

Bexhill Museum opened in 1914 within the shelter hall of Egerton Park. It merged with the Costume Museum in Old Town in 2003, and remains as an independent museum, largely run by volunteers: a new gallery was built in 2008.[87]

Sporting and leisure provision increased with the development of numerous parks, which include: Egerton Park, set out in the 1880s, with tennis courts added in 1888 and the town's first swimming pool in 1889 (the park was acquired by the town in 1901, and extended to Brockley Road in 1906); Bexhill Down, set out in its current form when control of the common land was transferred to the town in 1897; the Polegrove, purchased by the town in 1912, and set out as a recreation ground, which opened in 1923; Collington Wood, Westcourt Drive, which was purchased by the town in 1919 and maintained as a woodland; and Manor Gardens, formal gardens set out by the borough council following demolition of the medieval manor house in 1968.[88]

Cricket was played on the present ground on Bexhill Down by 1873, although the first town club played on a second ground on Dorset Road (established *c.*1898) until 1912. After the First World War the present town cricket club was founded, playing at what is now the Gulliver's Sports Ground, Sidley: this became the home of Sidley Cricket Club (established 1901) in 1948, with Bexhill Cricket Club moving to its present ground at Polegrove Sports Ground.[89] Football was played from 1889, at that point on a pitch on London Road.[90] Numerous short-lived teams have given rise to the town's present principal team Bexhill United, created by merger of Bexhill Town and Bexhill Amateur Athletic Club in 2002. The Bexhill Golf Club was formed in 1880, with its course at Galley Hill until *c.*1940 (the site is now occupied by Sutton Place). More important for golf in the town – and as an attraction to visitors – was the establishment of Cooden Beach Golf Club in 1911, followed by Highwoods Golf Club in 1924: both clubs survive.[91] The first public bowling green opened in Egerton Park in 1907 and is used by the Spartan Bowls Club (founded 1920). More extensive greens were laid out at the Polegrove recreation ground and are used by Bexhill Bowls Club (founded 1907). Gulliver's Bowls Club, Knole Road was established in 1952.[92] Most famously, the seafront at Bexhill was the location of the first motor race in England, attracting 200 competitors. Races were held from 1904 until 1907, when the dedicated track at Brooklands opened.[93]

More recently established sports and leisure facilities include the Bexhill Leisure Pool at Ravenside Retail Park (built in 1989[94]), and Bexhill Leisure Centre, Down Road.

Films were shown at the Kursaal from as early as 1898, with a purpose-built cinema – The Bijou, Buckhurst Place – opening in 1910 (as the Savoy, closed 1954: demolished 1993). This was followed by the Cinema-de-Luxe, Western Road (opened 1913, closed 1921); the Picture Playhouse, Western Road (1921, now the Curzon Picture Playhouse), and the Gaiety Cinema (opened in the York Hall, London Road, 1935; bombed and closed 1940). The more substantial cinemas of the inter-war years were represented in Bexhill by the Ritz, Buckhurst Road (opened 1937, closed 1961).[95]

4 ARCHAEOLOGY

4.1 The medieval village

4.1.1 Buildings

Fig. 12. St Peter's church. Nave looking north.

The parish **church of St Peter** is the oldest surviving building in Bexhill. Although substantial alterations in 1878 and 1907 have left little medieval fabric visible on the exterior, the interior is better preserved. Evidence for what was identified as Saxon fabric was uncovered during the 1878 works, in the form of flint-rubble laid in herringbone courses, forming the wall through which the late 12th-century arcade was cut. However, the herringbone work could equally date from the late 11th or early 12th century. J. E. Ray examined the building in detail – including during works of 1907 – and suggests that the lower part of the west tower is of late 11th-century date. Ray discounts the possibility of the tower north and south arches opening into aisles on the basis that the nave arcades are later, although admits that there is no satisfactory alternative.[96] However, it is possible that the nave arcades replaced early Norman piers as has evidently occurred, for example, at Icklesham church, where the nave piers provide perhaps the closest parallel to those at Bexhill, in both cases dating from *c.*1165-75. The nave was extended eastwards by a bay in the early to mid-13th century, and a chancel added: the chancel was demolished in 1878, but the imposts and voussoirs of the chancel arch have been re-used to form the present chancel arch 7m to the east. The south porch and south aisle extensions appear to have been later medieval works, but were demolished in 1878 without adequate record. The mid-15th-century Batisford chantry chapel survives, however, albeit now opening off the nave rather than the north side of the chancel chapel as it did pre-1878.[97]

Bexhill Manor House (located on the corner of Church Street and De La Warr Road, in Old Town) was a substantial flint cobble and stone house of which only part was medieval at the time of its demolition by the borough council in 1968, the house having been substantially rebuilt in 1662 and later expanded. The known medieval part of the house comprised the service wing – which lay north of a replaced medieval open hall – and, to the north-east of this, another wing. Following demolition ruins were retained (now partly overgrown), with features – such as a mid-14th-century trefoiled ogee headed window (formerly high up in the north-east wing) – re-set. The main *in situ* medieval feature surviving today, however, is the ground-floor part of the south wall of the service room, which preserves twin service doorways of *c.*1500, which opened into the medieval hall to the south.[98]

Fig. 13. Bexhill Manor House: remains of the wall between the service rooms and the hall.

Fig. 14. Saxon grave-cover, St Peter's church.

A pair of semi-detached Wealden houses of 15th-century date survive behind later façades **at 4 and 5 Church Street**. Analysis of the latter (called Lychgates) shows the original form to have comprised a single-bay hall, with a cross-passage marked by a spere truss (and oversailed by a first floor chamber), with a service bay to the north. The building had a coeval rear aisle. To the rear of Lychgates, a rear wing was also of medieval date, but was rebuilt in the 17th century.[99]

4.1.2 Excavations

Whilst there have been no significant archaeological excavations within Bexhill Old Town, or indeed, any medieval finds and features from the minor watching briefs that have taken place (see section 1.5.2), a rare and extremely unusual **Saxon grave-cover** was discovered *c.*150mm beneath the floor of St Peter's church during the works of 1878 near the south arcade of the Norman nave.[100] The small grave-cover has a three-dimensional form being a truncated pyramid on an oblong base. While its combination of decoration – which comprises animal, plant, interlace and geometric motifs – is characteristic of the late eighth and ninth centuries, the form of the individual motifs cannot be that early and is best paralleled in (and thus datable to) the late 10th or early 11th century.[101] It is made of a fine-grained Hastings Beds sandstone matching either the Ashdown Beds or the Cliff End Sandstone, both of which outcrop locally.[102]

4.1.3 Topographic analysis (Maps 5-6)

The absence of substantial archaeological evidence has resulted in considerable ambiguity as to the chronology and topographical development of medieval Bexhill. The role of topographic analysis in resolving this ambiguity is limited, however, due to the late date of detailed maps and, above all, the fact that medieval Bexhill evidently comprised a modest village devoid of major urban topographic elements.

Looking at the earliest known element of Bexhill, two factors suggest that the scale of the present churchyard might be quite different from that in earlier, and especially the Saxon, periods. First, the extremely small and irregularly shaped churchyard indicates that there has been encroachment, although the present boundary was established by the time of detailed mapping *c.*1800. Second, the minster status of St Peter's (section 3.1.2) would imply a much more extensive precinct, as Blair has demonstrated elsewhere.[103] The topography of the site is suggestive, since Church Street is not a pre-existing or major through-route and need not define the west of any early churchyard or precinct: indeed, it has been suggested that Rimswell Cottage was built in the early 18th century before the present street front was established.[104] Moreover, prior to the early 19th century, the rectory was located to the west of Church Street, on the site of the present community centre.[105] Wider potential precinct boundaries are not obvious, however, especially

Fig. 15. Boswell House, 22 High Street: 18th-century façade to possible earlier house.

on the north side of the church (although there is tantalizing photographic evidence of *c.*1937 for curving lynchets north of the church,[106] these were not examined before destruction by the suburbs of Lychgate Close and Rectory Way, and, thus, their date is unknown: functionally the widely spaced and diverging pair appear to represent agricultural terracing rather than marking a mid-slope routeway). The principal surviving early features surrounding the church are the roads (from north-east to north-west comprising Hastings Road, de la Warr Road, High Street and Chantry Lane). It is possible that these roads in part or together mark the extent or otherwise reflect a more extensive minster precinct: certainly they describe an area entirely consistent with (though hardly proof of) the known scale of minster enclosures.

Evidently the street pattern of Old Town had begun to emerge, and may well have been fully defined, by the later medieval period: the location of the manor house appears to respect De La Warr Road and, to the south, Church Street, while the 15th-century semi-detached Wealden houses and 4 and 5 Church Street suggest that the eastern side of the street at least was defined by this date.

4.2 The village *c.*1540-1845

4.2.1 Buildings

Bexhill has 31 surviving buildings that date from between 1500 and 1850: two probably from the 17th century, 14 from the 18th century, and 15 from the early 19th century.

The 17th-century buildings comprise Lychgate Cottage, 5a Church Street, which consists of the rebuilt timber-framed rear wing of medieval Lychgate, 5 Church Street (see above, section 4.1.1); and, probably of this date, timber-framed Forge House, 1 High Street. Timber framing is also found amongst the surviving 18th-century houses, as at the early 18th-century Rimswell Cottage, Church Street.[107] It is brick, however, that dominates the 18th-century building materials, with examples of brick-built houses including The Grange, Upper Sea Road; and 2-3 Church Street. The buildings of the early 19th century are consistent with those of the previous century in that they are relatively modest in scale. Use of stucco and weatherboarding increased in this period. Examples of early 19th-century date include Hanover House, 7 High Street, with it stuccoed façade that includes a central doorway with pilasters; and a weatherboarded row of houses at 6-10 Church Street. Former warehouses of this period (both now weatherboarded) survive at 52-4 Belle Hill

Fig. 16. 2-3 Church Street.

and Quakers Mill, 1 De La Warr Road. The former Wesleyan Methodist chapel on Chapel Path (i.e. just north of modern King Offa Way) is a simple rendered building with roundheaded windows.

4.2.2 Topography (Map 7)

Fig. 17. Yeakell and Gardner 1778 map (detail).

Fig. 18. Ordnance Survey draft 1806-7 (detail).

While the barracks at Bexhill were short lived (1798-1815) their scale dwarfed the village. Moreover, they left a permanent topographic legacy in that they exerted a westwards pull on the development of the village that survived their dismantling. This is evident in the increased building along pre-existing Belle Hill, which previously lay outside the built-up area of the village. In other respects, however, the topography of the village and the surrounding area was very little changed (see Figs. 17, 18 and 23).

4.3 Expansion: *c.*1845-2008 (Maps 3, 8 and 9)

4.3.1 Buildings and topography

The majority of the buildings in Bexhill date from this period, partly as a result of loss of earlier buildings, but mainly through expansion of the town. This growth was slow to accelerate after the railway arrived (1846), so that the Ordnance Survey map of 1873 shows there was no significant difference from the pre-railway period, and the railway station remained isolated between the village and the seafront.

From the 1880s development was rapid, with initial building scattered and focused inland on London Road (i.e. between Belle Hill and the first station), north of Belle Hill (at St James's Road and St John's Road) and in Hastings Road. From the mid-1880s denser development began, so that by 1899 the new seaside resort south of the railway was concentrated between Egerton Park on the west and Dorset Road on the east (giving a built-up seafront of *c.*1.1km), with development north of the railway largely restricted to the London Road area, south-west of the medieval village. Although large semi-detached and detached villas predominated in the Buckhurst Road and Station Road area, most housing in the core of the new resort was terraced, ranging from modest workers' housing in the streets north and south of Victoria Road, to the predominantly four-storey terraces of Devonshire Road (in the 1890s becoming the town's main shopping street[108]), and, most impressively, the slightly curved six-storied terrace of the flats of Stonehaven Court, Knole Court, Berkeley Mansions, Newdigate House, Carlton Court and Hartley Court (De La Warr Parade), which was built on the seafront *c.*1895 in a loose Queen Anne style. East of this is the Sackville Hotel of 1890, which is the principal survivor of dedicated resort buildings of this period (now flats, with an added storey, a modified roof, and the original cupola and the turret roof removed). The churches of this period include no outstanding examples, but noteworthy churches within the emerging resort include flint-built St Barnabas, Sea Road (Arthur Blomfield,

Fig. 19. Carlton Court, Newdigate House and Berkeley Mansions, De La Warr Parade.

1890-1); and the flint hall (originally the priest's house and school-church) of 1893 located at the rear of the Roman Catholic church of St Mary Magdalene, Sea Road. Public buildings of the late 19th century include the loosely Elizabethan brick and stone town hall (1894-5, Henry Ward), and the gothic brick and stone St Barnabas' girls and infants school, Western Road (1893: now the public library).

The following decade saw accelerated building so that by 1909 the promenade had been extended 500m west to Richmond Road, although building had only expanded as far as the north and south sides of Egerton Park. On the east side, the De La Warr's optimistically set out Marine Parade of the 1880s still continued east of the town, but the previously scattered development east of Sea Road had consolidated and slightly extended in the Lionel Road area. On the north-west side of the resort the opening of Bexhill West Station in Terminus Road in 1902 meant radical change to this area in the form of the new railway line running north-north-east on the edge of the town, and, by 1909, it had attracted housing nearby (such as that at Sutherland Avenue and Colebrook Road). To the north of the new town, the suburb in the Holliers Hill area continued to develop, but more significant was the appearance of the new suburb on De La Warr land east of Old Town in the Dorset Road area, which comprises a mix of semi-detached and detached villas. One of the most distinctive surviving developments on the Edwardian seafront was the building of Moghul style bungalows at Marina Court Avenue, Marina Arcade and Channel View in 1901-7, followed, in 1911, by the adjacent Colonnade bandstand. Again, there are no outstanding churches of this period, but noteworthy examples include the stone-built Roman Catholic church of St Mary Magdalene, Sea Road (Arthur Young, 1906-7); and the Perpendicular-styled brick, flint and timber frame St George's Presbyterian church, Lionel Road and Cantelupe Road (George Gray, 1901: now Bexhill United Reformed Church). Public buildings include the LBSCR's new station in Sea Road (the third station, a station fronting Devonshire Square having been built in 1891[109]), built in polychrome brick and stone in Queen Anne style in 1901.

The extensive inter-war and post-1945 development suburbs of Bexhill, with their increased provision of semi-detached, detached and bungalow housing, but also including blocks

Fig. 20. Devonshire Road.

Fig. 21. Marina Arcade.

of flats (such as those on the seafront south of the Polegrove Recreation Ground), fall almost entirely outside the EUS study area, so that today the built-up area extends 6.2km from the Ravenside Retail and Leisure Park, near Glyne Gap, to Cooden, and inland up to 2.9km at Sidley. Much of this has been achieved by post-1945 residential housing estates, but as early as the 1920s development saw Bexhill expand westwards to join emerging Cooden.

Within the EUS study area there has been considerable redevelopment and infill. Without doubt the most important building of this period is the De La Warr Pavilion (see cover and Fig. 22). As a result of the considerable and persuasive efforts of the 9th Earl De La Warr, Bexhill's socialist mayor from 1932, a RIBA-run architectural competition (very much geared to stimulating Modernist designs) was organized for a new entertainment centre in 1933. The design of the winning architects – Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff – was built in 1935 using the latest techniques (most notably the all-welded steel frame) and modern lines (in glass and white concrete) in which the central entrance hall element – with its spiral stairs in glazed apsidal projections – is flanked by blocks containing the theatre/concert hall, and the restaurant/reading room/lounge.[110] With the demolition of the adjacent Metropole Hotel in 1955 and Marina Court in 1970, the De La Warr Pavilion now stands rather isolated. Demolitions have also affected other parts of the core of the seaside resort, in some cases – such as the gaps in the late Victorian buildings on Devonshire Road – as the result of bombing in the Second World War, but elsewhere the result of commercial redevelopment. Along the seafront, there are three major late 20th-century blocks between Devonshire Road and Brassey Road, and blocks on West Parade to either side of Park Road. Bexhill has not seen the major town centre redevelopment for a shopping centre, however, with the brick-built supermarket of Sainsbury's, Buckhurst Place (1976) the only large-scale retail outlet. Perhaps the most significant post-1945 development has been that north of the Victorian and Edwardian seaside resort, around Old Town: hitherto retaining something of its earlier village character in that it was largely surrounded by fields, Old Town was abutted by new development on all sides, including housing at Millfield Rise and Larkhill on the south, Old Manor Close on the east, and in the extensive suburbs north of King Offa Way (the new dual-carriageway bypass of 1978).

Fig. 22. De La Warr Pavilion, southern stair.

Fig. 23. Bexhill *c.*1805, showing Old Town and adjacent barracks (*East Sussex Record Office*: AMS5819).

5 STATEMENT OF HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER

5.1 Town summary

5.1.1 Historic environment overview

Despite having a minster church, and being a single-village hundred, Bexhill failed to emerge as a town in the 11th century, and the scale of later medieval and post-medieval occupation was modest. This in part explains the lack of surviving early buildings, although the church, the ruinous Manor House and 15th-century 4-5 Church Street are notable exceptions. More survives from the 18th century, when the village began to grow and from *c.*1800, when Bexhill was the location of substantial barracks built during the Napoleonic Wars. Even with the arrival of the railway in 1846, however, Bexhill remained a village until developed as a resort from *c.*1880. Essentially Bexhill (or as it became known, Bexhill-on-Sea) is a town of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods (together with substantial post-First World War suburbs), with the core of the resort between the older village and the seafront. Much of the historic environment value of the town, therefore, rests on its wide range of late Victorian and early 20th-century buildings (including domestic, seaside and ecclesiastical), including Bexhill's most famous building – the De La Warr Pavilion – which dates from 1935.

Less visible is the archaeological evidence of the pre-resort town and parish, with its medieval origins. The archaeological potential of Old Town (or, indeed, most of the surrounding suburbs) has yet to be realized through controlled excavation.

5.1.2 Historic environment designations (Map 4)

There are 47 listed buildings or structures in the EUS study area itself (one Grade I, one Grade II* and 45 Grade II). Of these, four predate 1500; two are 17th century; 14 are 18th century; 15 are early 19th century; three are from 1841-80; eight are from 1881-1913; and one is from 1914-45.[111]

Bexhill has two Conservation Areas, both within the EUS study area. There are no Scheduled Monuments within the EUS area or, indeed, the wider built-up area of Bexhill.

5.1.3 Historic building materials

Traditional timber framing is limited due to the small number of pre-1700 buildings, with the most notable examples comprising 4-5 Church Street, although here hidden by later façades. More visible is the much restored timber framing at Forge House, 1 High Street (or probable 17th-century date), and its presence must be suspected at other buildings: for example behind what appears to be 18th-century re-facing at Boswell House, 22 High Street. Local sandstone survives rarely, with visible examples being the medieval parish church and the lower part of the barn or granary to the north-west of the Rectory. Later use of the stone is widespread for dressings in the late Victorian and Edwardian buildings of the resort, but appears to be non-local limestones, such as Bath stone. Brick is the predominant material in the 18th-century houses of Old Town (with good examples at 2-3 Church Street, and The Grange, Upper Sea Road) and in the early 19th-century, but is often obscured by stucco and weatherboarding. Brick is the principal building in the new resort, with polychrome use a feature of many streets (Bexhill is too late for the widespread use of stucco seen in other Sussex coastal resorts, such as Brighton or architecturally conservative Eastbourne). The 20th century brought new materials, seen most famously in the welded steel, concrete and glass of the De La Warr Pavilion..

5.2 Historic Character Types

5.2.1 Historic Character Types and chronology (Maps 5-9)

Historic Character Types (HCTs) for Sussex EUS
Lane/road [includes all historic routes]
Major road scheme [modern ring roads, motorways etc.]
Bridge/causeway
Regular burgage plots
Irregular historic plots [i.e. pre-1800]
Proto-urban
Vacant [reverted from built-up to fields etc.]
Market place
Church/churchyard [i.e. parish]
Cemetery
Religious house [abbey, priory, convent etc.]
Great house
Castle
Town defences
Other fortification
Barracks
School/college

Public
Farmstead/barn
Mill
Suburb [estates and individual houses]
Retail and commercial [i.e. post-1800]
Extractive industry [e.g. sand pit, brickfield]
Heavy industry [e.g. steel or automotive industry]
Light industry [e.g. industrial estates]
Utility
Quay/wharf [inc. boatyards]
Harbour/marina/dock
Station, sidings and track
Inland water
Orchard
Market garden [inc. nursery]
Allotments
Race course
Sports field [inc. stadia, courts, centres etc.]
Park
Informal parkland [e.g. small civic areas, large grounds]
Seafront [piers, promenades etc.]
Beach/cliffs

Table 1. Sussex EUS Historic Character Types.

Historic Character Types have been developed in the Sussex EUS to describe areas of common character by reference to generic types found across all 41 towns. Historic function is often the key determinant of character type, hence the term 'Historic Character Types' and the time-depth implicit in many of the types in Table 1 (e.g. *regular burgage plots*). The types also reflect the character of these towns, and, thus, they are different from those that would be applied nationally or to another county.

The Historic Character Types have been mapped to areas within the towns (polygons in the Geographical Information System that underpins the Sussex EUS). Whilst character type can prove consistent throughout a large area (for example, across a late 20th-century housing estate), different historic use of part of that area has been used as a basis for subdivision. This is to allow the application of the types in Table 1 to the mapped polygons throughout the 15 periods of the **EUS chronology** (Table 2). This means that for any area within the town, or mapped polygon on the Geographical Information System, both the present Historic Character Type and the past land use(s) are defined.

This approach gives time-depth to the map-based character component of the Sussex EUS, and is structured to take account of both upstanding and buried physical evidence of the past. It enables the generation of maps (e.g. Maps 4-7) showing the changing land use of the urban area throughout the history of each town, and, through use of the Geographical Information System developed as part of this assessment, for simple interrogation of any area in the town to show all its known past land uses.

Period	Date
Period 1	500,000BC-AD42
Period 2	43-409
Period 3	410-949
Period 4	950-1065
Period 5	1066-1149
Period 6	1150-1349
Period 7	1350-1499
Period 8	1500-1599
Period 9	1600-1699
Period 10	1700-1799
Period 11	1800-1840
Period 12	1841-1880
Period 13	1881-1913
Period 14	1914-1945
Period 15	1946-present

Table 2. Sussex EUS chronology.

5.2.2 Historic Character Types in Bexhill (Maps 8 and 9)

Although Historic Character Types represent county-wide types, modern Bexhill is characterized by its particular concentration of some types and the comparative rarity, or absence, of others. For example, the identification of large areas of *suburbs* even within the historic core defined by the EUS study area reflects the late emergence of the town, while the absence of *regular burgage plots* reflects the fact that medieval Bexhill was a village and not a market town.

5.3 Historic Urban Character Areas (Map 10)

5.3.1 Defining Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)

Whereas Historic Character Types have been applied to areas of the Sussex towns with consistent visible character and historical development – and are mapped across the whole history for each town – **Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)** represent meaningful areas of the modern town. Although similar areas are found in many towns, HUCAs are unique, can include components of different history and antiquity, and usually represent

amalgamation of several Historic Character Types.

Thus, HUCA 1 in Bexhill combines four Historic Character Types that represent the *church/churchyard* dating from Period 3 (i.e. 410-949); *irregular historic plots* that date from Period 5 (1066-1149), and probably earlier, to Period 10(1700-99); *suburb*(s) from Period 11 (1800-40) to Period 15 (1946-present); and a *public* area from Period 15.

Combining this complexity into a single HUCA called *Old Town* reflects the largely coherent character of the area today. This coherence renders HUCAs suitable spatial units for describing the historic environment of the EUS towns, for assessing their **archaeological potential**, **Historic Environment Value** and for linking to **research questions**.

Some components of the towns are not included as HUCAs: roads (other than those that were built as part of a particular development) and waterways are kept separate as they frequently antedate surviving buildings or the known urban activity.

5.3.2 Archaeological potential

Whilst the nature and extent of areas to which Historic Character Types have been applied is closely related to the survival of buried archaeology, this assessment considers the archaeological potential at the larger scale of the HUCAs. The reasons are twofold: first, the typically smaller scale of areas of common Historic Character Type could misleadingly imply that high, or even low, archaeological potential is precisely confined, or that archaeological value is exactly coterminous with the edge of specific features (standing or buried); and, second, most Sussex towns have had insufficient archaeological investigation to support this precision. For this reason, too, there is no grading or ranking of archaeological potential. Rather, the summary of archaeological potential is used to inform the overall (graded) assessment of **Historic Environment Value** of each HUCA (see below).

When considering the archaeological potential of the towns, it is important to recognize that archaeology often survives 19th and 20th-century development and that it is misleading to assume complete destruction. Also, whilst pre-urban archaeology tells us little about the towns themselves, it contributes to wider archaeological research.

In assessing the likelihood of buried archaeology within areas in the towns there has been consideration of the potential for archaeology 'buried', or hidden, within later buildings and structures, as well as that for below-ground features.

5.3.3 Historic Environment Value (Map 11)

The **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of each HUCA is assessed here, and expressed as a value from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Such values are iniquitous to some and always subjective, but here provide a necessary means of consistently and intelligently differentiating (for the purposes of conservation) the upstanding fabric, boundaries and archaeology that form the historic urban environment. The Historic Environment Value (HEV) of each HUCA is based on assessment of:

- Townscape rarity
- Time-depth or antiquity
- Completeness.

Lesser additional considerations in the assessment comprise:

- Visibility
- Historic association.

The full methodology for assessing Historic Environment Value forms part of the annexe to the historic environment management guidance for Rother District.

5.3.4 Vulnerability

The vulnerability of each HUCA is also considered, although many future threats cannot be anticipated. These brief analyses mean that this Statement of Historic Urban Character can be used to focus conservation guidance.

5.3.5 Research questions

Where relevant, reference is made to questions in the **Research Framework** for Bexhill (below, section 6). This referencing links these key questions to specific HUCAs, helping ensure that any investigation of the historic environment (such as that as a condition of development, under PPG15 or PPG16) is properly focused.

5.3.6 Bexhill's Historic Urban Character Areas (Map 10)

The following assessments of the Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) of Bexhill commence with those that make up the historic core. Inevitably, these assessments are more

extensive than those that relate to recent expansion of the town.

HUCA 1 Old Town (HEV 4)

HUCA 1 comprises the Saxon minster and medieval village of Bexhill, which, being sited 800m inland from the coast, did not form part of the emerging resort on the seafront until engulfed by expanding suburbs in the 20th century. Old Town, however, had a significant role in the early development of Bexhill and its existence was undoubtedly a key factor in the development of the seaside resort adjacent to it.

Despite the surrounding suburbs, Old Town – as medieval Bexhill is now called – has retained its distinct identity in part due to the presence of historic buildings (including the medieval parish church) and streets, as well as its own shops and the Bell Hotel. There are 31 listed buildings or structures (30 Grade II; and one Grade II*), of which one is Period 4 (950-1065), three are Period 7 (1350-1499), two are Period 9 (17th century), 12 are Period 10 (18th century), 11 are Period 11 (1800-40), and two are Period 12 (1841-80). The oldest and principal building in the HUCA is St Peter's church (Grade II*). This underwent drastic alterations during enlargement in 1878 and 1907, leaving little medieval fabric visible externally, but walls probably of 11th-century date survive, through which late 12th-century nave arcades were cut, and, to the west, the lower part of the tower is early Norman. A mid-15th-century chantry chapel survives. The Manor House (Grade II) on the corner of Church Street and De La Warr Road has faired even worse, being demolished in 1968, nominally for road widening: the surviving ruins include windows and doorways from the mid-14th century and from *c.*1500. Less visible, but particularly noteworthy, is the survival of a pair of semi-detached Wealden houses with a rear aisle, of 15th-century date, at 4 and 5 Church Street (Grade II). Late use of timber frame is evident at early 18th-century Rimswell Cottage, Church Street (Grade II). Noteworthy, later 18th-century buildings of brick include The Grange, Upper Sea Road and 2-3 Church Street (both Grade II). Buildings of early 19th-century date include Hanover House, 7 High Street, with its stuccoed façade that includes a central doorway with pilasters; a weatherboarded row of houses at 6-10 Church Street; and a former warehouse (now weatherboarded) at Quakers Mill, 1 De La Warr Road (all Grade II). The Bell Hotel has a façade of 1888, apparently added to the surviving 18th-century house (unlisted).

Survival of historic plots is only moderate and there is no evidence for regular burgage plots.

There has been no significant archaeological investigation in this HUCA, but the known antiquity of the minster site and the surrounding medieval village, the survival of numerous historic buildings and plots means that the **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is high.

The survival of medieval and, especially, post-medieval buildings, and some early plot boundaries; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 4.

HUCA 1 has seen considerable change in the 20th century, most notably demolition of Bexhill Manor House and associated road widening, but also including late 20th-century infill development (e.g. to the rear of the Bell Hotel, and, west of the church, St Peter's Mews) and extensive redevelopment (e.g. north of the church, replacing the early 19th-century rectory; and south of the manor house, replacing the late 19th-century convalescent home). The northern edge of the HUCA has seen the construction of a bypass (opened 1978). Although there is little scope for further infill, the facts that only a small proportion of the buildings are listed, the evident pressure for redevelopment, and the significant Historic Environment Value mean that the HUCA has a high **vulnerability**.

Research questions especially relevant to this HUCA relate to the minster and the early settlement (RQ2, RQ3, RQ4).

HUCA 2 Barracks (HEV 2)

HUCA 2 lies immediately to the west and north-west of the known extent of the medieval village, with the former common land of Bexhill Down lying further to the west. Although there was some scattered housing along the west side of Chantry Lane and the south side of Belle Hill, the area was largely unoccupied until chosen as a site for extensive barracks in the Napoleonic War: the barracks extended west of the HUCA and included a detached hors barracks on the west side of Bexhill Down. The barracks attracted further, permanent buildings and a cemetery, leaving a modest permanent legacy after closure in 1815, although significant redevelopment did not occur until the late 19th-century development of the new resort at Bexhill.

Today the area comprises a suburb of Bexhill, since 1978 flanking the dual carriageway of the Old Town bypass (King Offa Way). There are six listed buildings (all Grade II) of which two are Period 10 (18th century), and three are Period 11

(1800-40). Barrack Hall (its name deriving from use as the officers' mess[112]), Chantry Lane, has at its core a brick building of 18th-century (possibly earlier) date, while 86-8 Belle Hill (formerly one house) is more obviously 18th century and has a stuccoed façade. 52-4 Belle Hill consists of a weatherboarded warehouse of early 19th-century date, very possibly representing survival of a utilitarian building erected to support the barracks. The modest Wesleyan Methodist chapel at Belle Hill, which is rendered and has roundheaded windows, dates from 1825 (unlisted).

Considerable redevelopment has occurred in the late 19th and 20th centuries, suggesting that the **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is likely to be limited: this was confirmed by a watching brief at 103 Belle Hill, although this did reveal evidence of gravel metalling that appeared to relate to the barracks.[113]

The survival of a few post-medieval historic buildings; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 2.

HUCA 2 has seen significant post-1945 development in the form of the bypass, and infill housing off Belle Hill and Chantry Lane. Change is likely to continue as there is scope for further infill and the predominantly unlisted buildings (such as the late 19th-century houses along Barrack Road and in the Salisbury Road area) are susceptible to redevelopment. The modest Historic Environment Value of the area, however, means that **vulnerability** is low.

Research questions especially relevant to this HUCA relate to the early settlement and the barracks (RQ3, RQ4, RQ11).

HUCA 3 Railway (HEV 2)

HUCA 3 lies between the medieval village and the seafront, and comprises the railway line and station, and the vicinity. This includes the site of the original station of 1846 (on the north side of the tracks), the new station fronting Devonshire Square (1891) and the present station fronting Sea Road (1901-2).

Today, the area remains dominated by the railway, although the goods yard between the line and Buckhurst Place has been replaced by Sainsbury's supermarket (opened 1976). The area between Station Road and Buckhurst Road retains in part its late 19th-century residential character, although has become more mixed, combining businesses, utilities (the telephone exchange), a youth centre and churches. There are three listed buildings (all Grade II), comprising the polychrome brick and stone Queen Anne style Central station of 1901-2; and the flint hall (originally the priest's house and school-church) of 1893, and the adjacent stone-built Roman Catholic church of St Mary Magdalene, Sea Road (Arthur Young, 1906-7). No pre-railway boundaries survive.

The density of 19th-century development and subsequent redevelopment strongly, combined with the agricultural use of this area before 1846, suggests that **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is limited.

The lack of many historic buildings and plots; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 2.

HUCA 3 has seen considerable change since 1945, most notably with loss of the goods yard and with piecemeal redevelopment of the area between Station Road and Buckhurst Road. This is likely to continue in the form of replacement of unlisted buildings as a result of the commercial nature of most of the area. The modest Historic Environment Value of the area, however, means that **vulnerability** is low.

Broad, or Bexhill-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

HUCA 4 London Road (HEV 2)

HUCA 4 lies between Belle Hill (i.e. west of the medieval village) and the railway station of 1846. What is now London Road was created to provide access to the new station, but development did not get under way until *c.*1880, with London Road (then Station Road) establishing itself as the main shopping street of the merging resort, until eclipsed by Devonshire Road in the 1890s.

Today the HUCA continues to be primarily residential with retail and other businesses focused on London Road, together with public buildings (notably the town hall at the southern end of the HUCA and the fire station at the northern end). There is one listed building or monument: a stone and marble memorial in Town Hall Square erected in 1898 in memory of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lane. Adjacent are noteworthy buildings in the form of the loosely Elizabethan brick and stone town hall (1894-5), and the polychrome brick and stone former London and Counties Bank (1898: now the Citizens Advice Bureau). In London Road, notable buildings include the Congregationalist church (1897: now styled St John's United Reformed Church). To the west of this the streets off Victoria Road comprise modest late 19th-century terraces, while more substantial

Edwardian semi-detached houses are a feature of Amherst Road.

The density of late 19th and early 20th-century development, subsequent post-1945 redevelopment, and the largely agricultural use of this area before 1880 suggests that **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is limited.

The lack of many historic buildings and plots; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 2.

HUCA 4 has seen considerable change since 1945, most obviously on London Road with retail and residential redevelopments. This is likely to continue in the form of replacement of unlisted buildings as a result of the partly commercial nature of the area. The modest Historic Environment Value of the area, however, means that **vulnerability** is low.

Broad, or Bexhill-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

HUCA 5 Devonshire Road (HEV 2)

HUCA 5 lies immediately south of the railway, and comprises the core of the seaside resort as established by 1914. Devonshire Road itself became the main shopping street of the town in the 1890s, but many of the adjacent streets that together from this HUCA also combined shops and a residential function from the outset.

Today, the area retains its commercial function, and continues to be the commercial core of Bexhill, combining this with largely residential streets: shops are concentrated in Sackville Road, Western Road, Devonshire Road, St Leonards Road and Sea Road. There is only one listed building, comprising Hamptons, 16 St Leonards Road, which is one of the best preserved shops: dating from 1898, it was built as a tailor's shop with workrooms over. Constructed of red brick with stucco banding it is typical of Bexhill, and numerous other examples survive, most obviously in Devonshire Road and Sackville Road, though few as well preserved. The more purely residential streets, such as Linden Road, Albany Road and Albert Road, have less elaborate gables or polychromy, and typically have more restrained frontages with simple canted bay windows.

The density of late 19th and early 20th-century development, subsequent post-1945 redevelopment, and the largely agricultural use of this area before 1880 suggests that **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is limited.

The lack of many significant historic buildings and plots; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 2.

HUCA 5 has seen modest change since 1945, with some sporadic new building – such as that in Devonshire Road itself – the result of bomb damage in the Second World War. Piecemeal redevelopment taking the form of replacement or alteration of the predominantly unlisted buildings is likely, not least given the commercial nature of the area. The modest Historic Environment Value of the area, however, means that **vulnerability** is medium, with perhaps the greatest threat to the coherent groups (or continuous street frontages) of surviving late Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

Broad, or Bexhill-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

HUCA 6 Seafront (HEV 2)

HUCA 6 lies wholly south of the medieval village and comprises the beach, seafront promenades and the sea-facing buildings of the resort as defined by its extent *c.*1900. As such it was the focus for visitors coming to the seaside town, with provision for entertainment (e.g. the Kursaal concert hall of 1896 and the Colonnade bandstand of 1911) and the town's principal hotels (e.g. the Sackville Hotel of 1890; the Marine Hotel of 1895; and the Metropole Hotel of 1897-1900.)

Today the HUCA remains the focus of the pleasure resort aspect of Bexhill, but the decline of this element of the town's economy and the rise of the residential resort means that most of the hotels from *c.*1900 have gone, to be replaced by flats. There are four listed buildings (three Grade II and one Grade I). The slightly curved six-storied terrace of the flats of Stonehaven Court, Knole Court, Berkeley Mansions, Newdigate House, Carlton Court and Hartley Court (De La Warr Parade), is the most impressive survival of the early seafront development, and was built *c.*1895 in a loose Queen Anne style (Grade II). Opposite to this there is a similarly-dated shelter on the promenade (Grade II). More unusual are Moghul-style bungalows at Marina Court Avenue, with copper domes (Grade II): adjacent Marina Arcade and Channel View are in the same style and part of the same 1901-7 development by a variety of architects, although are unlisted. Also of architectural interest but unlisted is the adjacent Colonnade bandstand of 1911. Of the main seafront hotels only the Sackville Hotel (1890) survives, although

converted to flats, with an added storey, a modified roof, and the original cupola and the turret roof removed. The principal architectural element of the seafront is more recent and comprises the famous De La Warr Pavilion: the modernist design Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff was built in 1935 using an all-welded steel frame, clad in glass and white concrete, and comprises a central entrance hall element – with its spiral stairs in glazed apsidal projections – flanked by blocks containing the theatre/concert hall, and the restaurant/reading room/lounge (Grade I).

Although there is potential for geoarchaeological study of the evolving shoreline, the lack of previous known occupation and the density of development (excepting the beach) from *c.*1880 onwards means that the **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is limited.

Although the De La Warr Pavilion is an important example of Modernist resort architecture, the HUCA has suffered considerable losses from the demolition of the Kursaal in 1936 onwards. As a result of this and the limited archaeological potential, this HUCA has an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 2.

HUCA 6 has seen considerable change since 1945, most obviously demolition of late Victorian and Edwardian hotels. Further redevelopment is likely to continue in the form of replacement of unlisted buildings to create additional blocks of flats. The modest Historic Environment Value of the area, however, means that **vulnerability** is low.

Broad, or Bexhill-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

HUCA 7 Egerton Park (HEV 2)

HUCA 7 lies wholly south-west of the medieval village, and formed the western edge of the emerging resort in *c.*1900. The park itself was set out in the 1880s, with tennis courts added in 1888 and the town's first swimming pool in 1889 (the park was acquired by the town in 1901, and extended to Brockley Road in 1906). Bexhill Museum opened in 1914 within the shelter hall of Egerton Park. The park formed the focus for development of the surrounding streets, with the boating lake or pool having a functional role in draining a low lying and marshy area.

Today, the park survives and provides for informal recreation and sport (having tennis courts and bowling greens). The surrounding streets retain their residential function. There are no listed buildings or early plots, but some architectural interest is provided by the largely intact late Victorian terrace of Park Road along the east side of Egerton Park.

The density of late 19th and early 20th-century development (including drainage schemes) and subsequent post-1945 redevelopment suggest that **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is limited.

The lack of many historic buildings and plots; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 2.

HUCA 7 has seen little change since 1945, with minor exceptions such as rebuilding on the west side of Park Avenue and modification of facilities in the park itself. Although the Historic Environment Value of the area is modest, the unlisted nature of the buildings and the potential for redevelopment, or radical modification, of the park means that **vulnerability** is medium.

Broad, or Bexhill-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

HUCA 8 Cantelupe Road (HEV 2)

HUCA 8 lies wholly south-east of the medieval village, and was unoccupied until developed from the 1880s, forming the eastern edge of the emerging resort in *c.*1900. The area was developed as a residential suburb (with substantial semi-detached and detached houses), located to the rear of the seafront developments and just east of the commercial centre of the new town.

Today, the area retains its residential function, and its croquet lawns (now bowling greens) on Knole Road. There is only one listed building, which comprises St Barnabas, Sea Road, built to serve a new parish in 1890-1 by Arthur Blomfield in the Decorated style (Grade II).

The lack of previous known occupation and the density of development from *c.*1880 onwards means that the **archaeological potential** of this HUCA is limited.

HUCA 8 has seen little change since 1945, with the most significant exceptions being the redevelopment between Bolebroke Road and Middlesex Road and on the west side of Brassey Road. This has resulted in higher density housing and, given the unlisted nature of the buildings and the size of many of the villas of *c.*1900, it is likely that pressure for such redevelopment will continue. Although in part countered by the modest Historic Environment Value of the area, this suggests that **vulnerability** is medium.

Broad, or Bexhill-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

HUCA 9 Larkhill (HEV 1)

HUCA 9 lies to the south-west of the medieval village and, with the exception of a barn in existence by *c.*1800, remained an undeveloped open area between the village and the new resort until developed by the building of St Peter and St Paul Church of England Primary School, Buckhurst Road in 1956, and by housing estates combining blocks of flats, bungalows and detached houses, centred on Millfield Rise and Larkhill.

The location of this HUCA outside the pre-1900 developed area, the absence of any known non-urban archaeology, and the density of development suggest limited **archaeological potential**.

The quality of the 20th-century development, the absence of historic buildings or many historic boundaries, and limited archaeological potential give this HUCA an **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 1.

The Historic Environment Value of the area means that its **vulnerability** is low.

Broad, or Bexhill-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

5.3.7 Summary table of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Bexhill

Table 3 summarizes the assessments made in the individual Historic Urban Character Area descriptions (above). It provides a simplified comparison of the assessments across different parts of the town, and helps to draw out key points. As such it supports the preparation of guidance for the town (see section 1.3).

The table shows how Historic Character Types combine into more recognizable Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs). It summarizes the archaeological potential that, along with historic buildings and boundaries, contributes to the assessment of the Historic Environment Value of each HUCA. The assessment of vulnerability of each HUCA is important for developing guidance.

Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Bexhill				
Historic Character Types (HCTs)	*Historic Urban Character Area (HUCA)*	*Archaeological potential*	*Historic Environment Value (HEV)*	*Vulnerability*
Church/churchyard Irregular historic plots Public Suburb	**1. Old Town**	High	4	**High**
Irregular historic plots Informal parkland School/college Cemetery Allotments Suburb	**2. Barracks**	Limited	2	**Low**
Station, sidings and track Retail and commercial Suburb	**3. Railway**	Limited	2	**Low**
Informal parkland Public Retail and commercial Suburb	**4. London Road**	Limited	2	**Low**
School/college Suburb	**5. Devonshire Road**	Limited	2	**Medium**
Beach/cliffs Seafront Suburb	**6. Seafront**	Limited	2	**Low**
Inland water Park Suburb	**7. Egerton Park**	Limited	2	**Medium**
Church/churchyard Sports field Suburb	**8. Cantelupe Road**	Limited	2	**Medium**
Suburb School/college	**9. Larkhill**	Limited	1	**Low**

Table 3. Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Bexhill.

6 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

6.1 Pre-urban activity

Development pressure and opportunities for developer funding mean that archaeological excavations in the town, or prior to expansion of the town, are more likely to occur than in the surrounding area. Thus, archaeological excavations in Bexhill should address:

RQ1: What was the nature of the palaeo-environment (ancient environment), and the prehistoric, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon human activity in the area?

6.2 Origins

Archaeological and historical analysis has been limited, with resultant poor understanding of the origins of the settlement. Key questions include:

RQ2: What was the form, construction detail, date and curia of the first church, or minster, of St Peter?

RQ3: What evidence is there for Saxon occupation in and around Old Town and how does this relate to the minster?

RQ4: What was the extent, form, and economic nature of the earliest settlement at Old Town?

6.3 Medieval village

RQ5: What was the extent of the village in the 11th and mid-16th centuries, and to what degree did it change over this period?

RQ6: What evidence is there for the evolution of the street plan during this period, and when and where did built-up street frontages first occur?

RQ7: What different economic zones were there during this period, and how did they change?

RQ8: How did the Manor House develop during this period?

RQ9: What evidence is there for the economy of the village, especially with regard to any beach trade, and its relationship with ports at Bulverhythe and Northeye – and, further afield, Pevensey and Hastings?

6.4 The town 1540-1845

RQ10: What different zones (e.g. social differentiation, or types of activity), were there during this period, and how did they change?

RQ11: Why was Bexhill chosen as a location for major barracks, what was the socio-economic relationship between the militia and the village/parish, and what was the permanent legacy of the barracks?

7 Notes

[1] The 41 towns of the Sussex EUS are: Alfriston, Arundel, Battle, Bexhill, Bognor Regis, Bramber, Brighton, Burgess Hill, Crawley, Crowborough, Cuckfield, Ditchling, Eastbourne, East Grinstead, Hailsham, Hastings, Haywards Heath, Heathfield, Henfield, Horsham, Hove, Lewes, Lindfield, Littlehampton, Mayfield, Midhurst, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Petworth, Pevensey, Pulborough, Robertsbridge, Rotherfield, Rye, Seaford, Shoreham, Steyning, Storrington, Uckfield, Wadhurst and Worthing. Chichester and Winchelsea are omitted as they are the subjects of more intensive studies.

[2] The *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme* is led by West Sussex County Council in conjunction with the borough and district councils, AONB agencies and stakeholders. The main aims of the partnership are to produce a range of interlocking characterization studies; to produce planning and land management guidance; and to raise public and community awareness of character as a vital and attractive ingredient of the environment of the county. The full range of characterization studies comprise:

Landscape Character Assessments and Landscape Strategy for West Sussex (2005).

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Sussex (2003-8).

Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) (2004-8).

Intensive Urban Survey of Chichester/Fishbourne (2005-6) (Chichester District Council).

Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex (2004-6).

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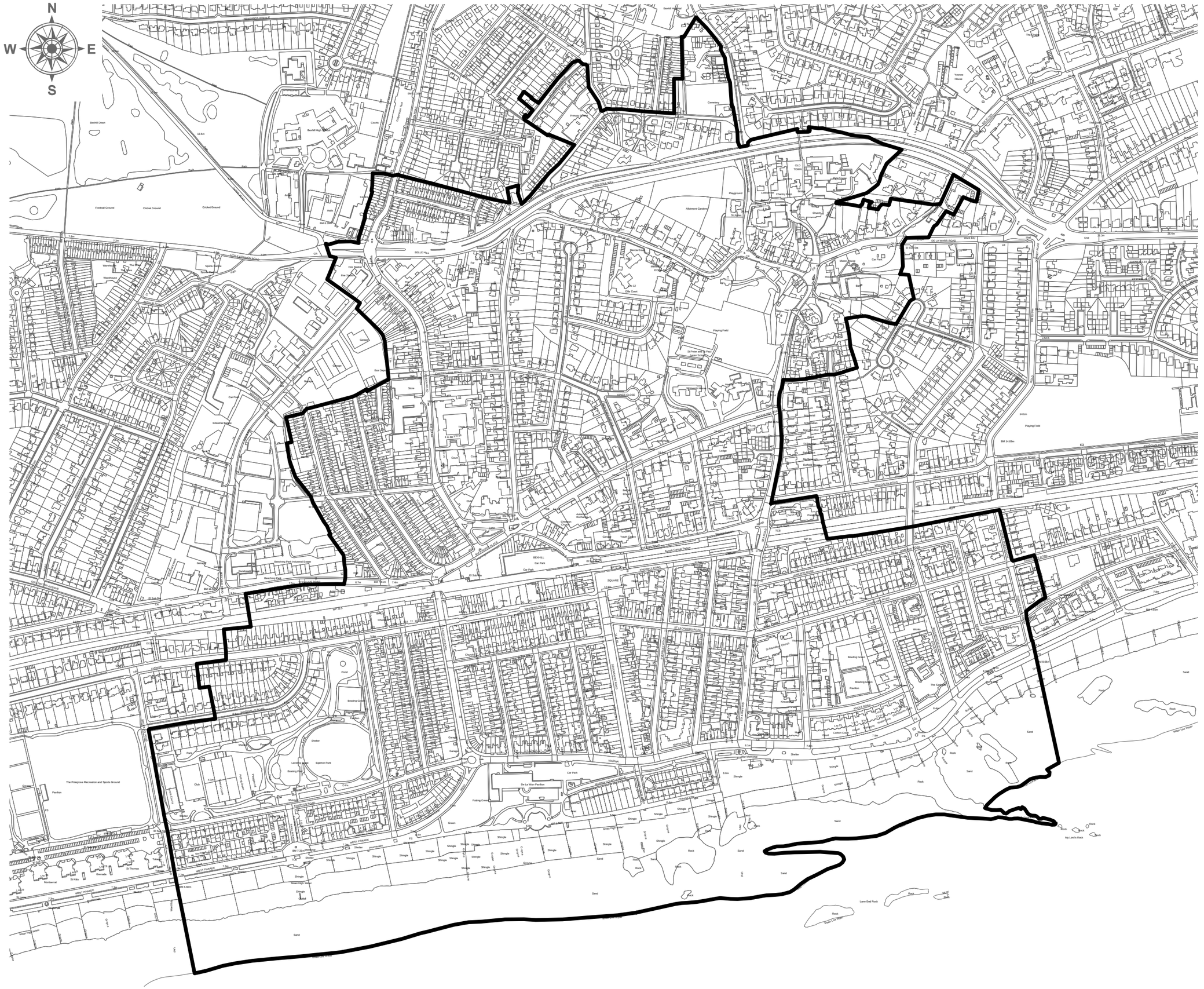

Sussex EUS

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

BEXHILL MAP 1

Extent of Bexhill EUS study area

KEY

EUS boundary

EUS research and mapping:
Dr Roland B Harris FSA MIFA
October 2008

SCALE 1:6,000

0 30 60 120 180 240 Meters

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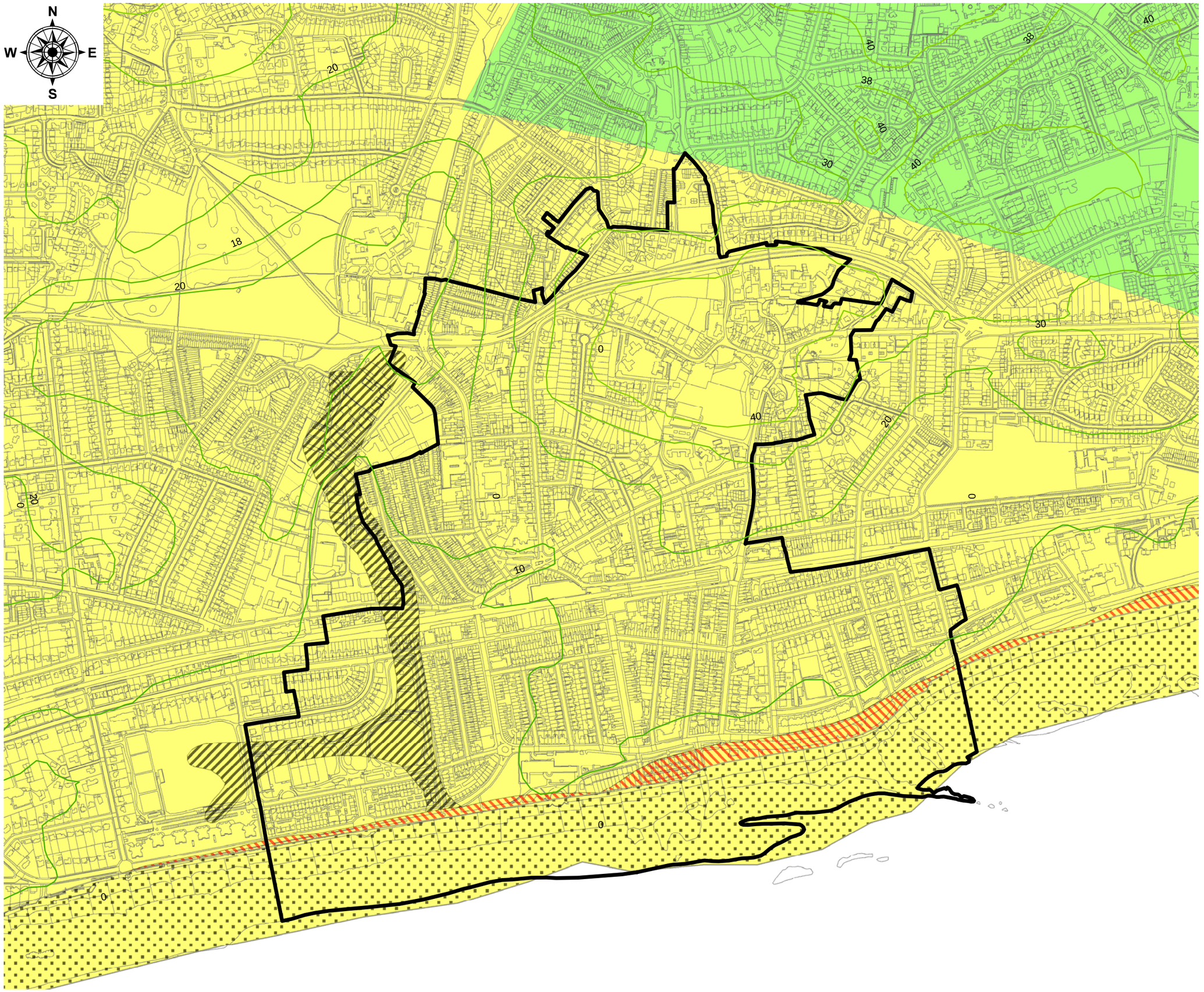

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BEXHILL MAP 2

Solid and drift geology with 10m contours

KEY

- ASHDOWN FORMATION
- TUNBRIDGE WELLS SAND FORMATION
- ALLUVIUM
- BEACH AND TIDAL FLAT DEPOSITS
- STORM BEACH DEPOSITS

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SCALE 1:7,500

0 37.5 75 150 225 300 Meters

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BEXHILL MAP 3

Ordnance Survey
1st Series 25” (1873)

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0 25 50 100 150 200 Meters

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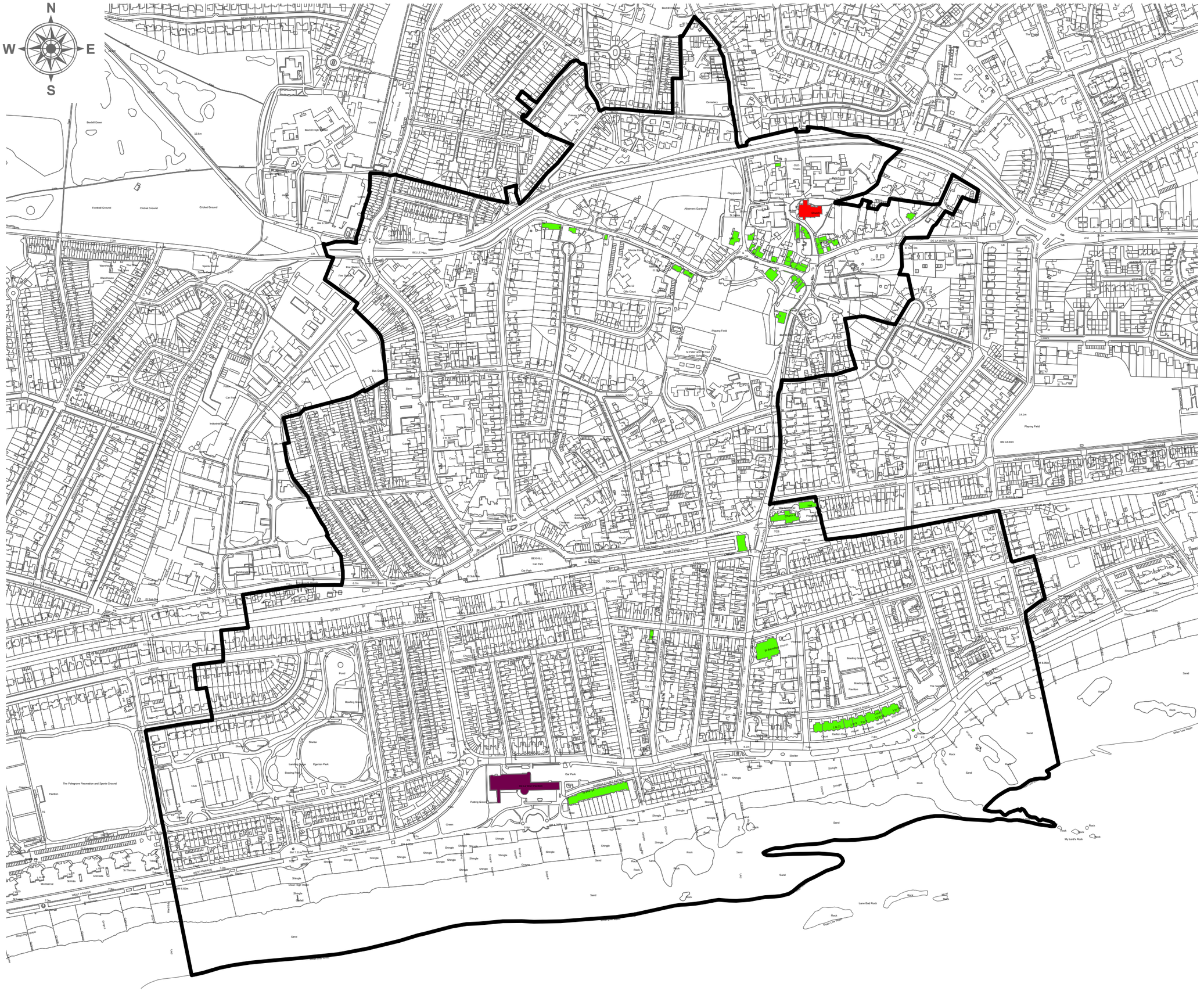

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BEXHILL MAP 4

Historic buildings

KEY

Bexhill buildings
Listing grade

- I
- II
- II*

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BEXHILL MAP 5

Period 4 (950-1065)

KEY

EUS Bexhill

HCT

- Church/churchyard
- Lane/road

NB extent and location of pre-Conquest village not known and not shown. The minster precinct is suggested only. The form of the coastline is not certain at this date, so is omitted.

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BEXHILL MAP 6

Period 7 (1350-1499)

KEY

EUS Bexhill HCT

- Church/churchyard
- Farmstead/barn
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Vacant

NB The form of the coastline is not certain at this date, so is omitted.

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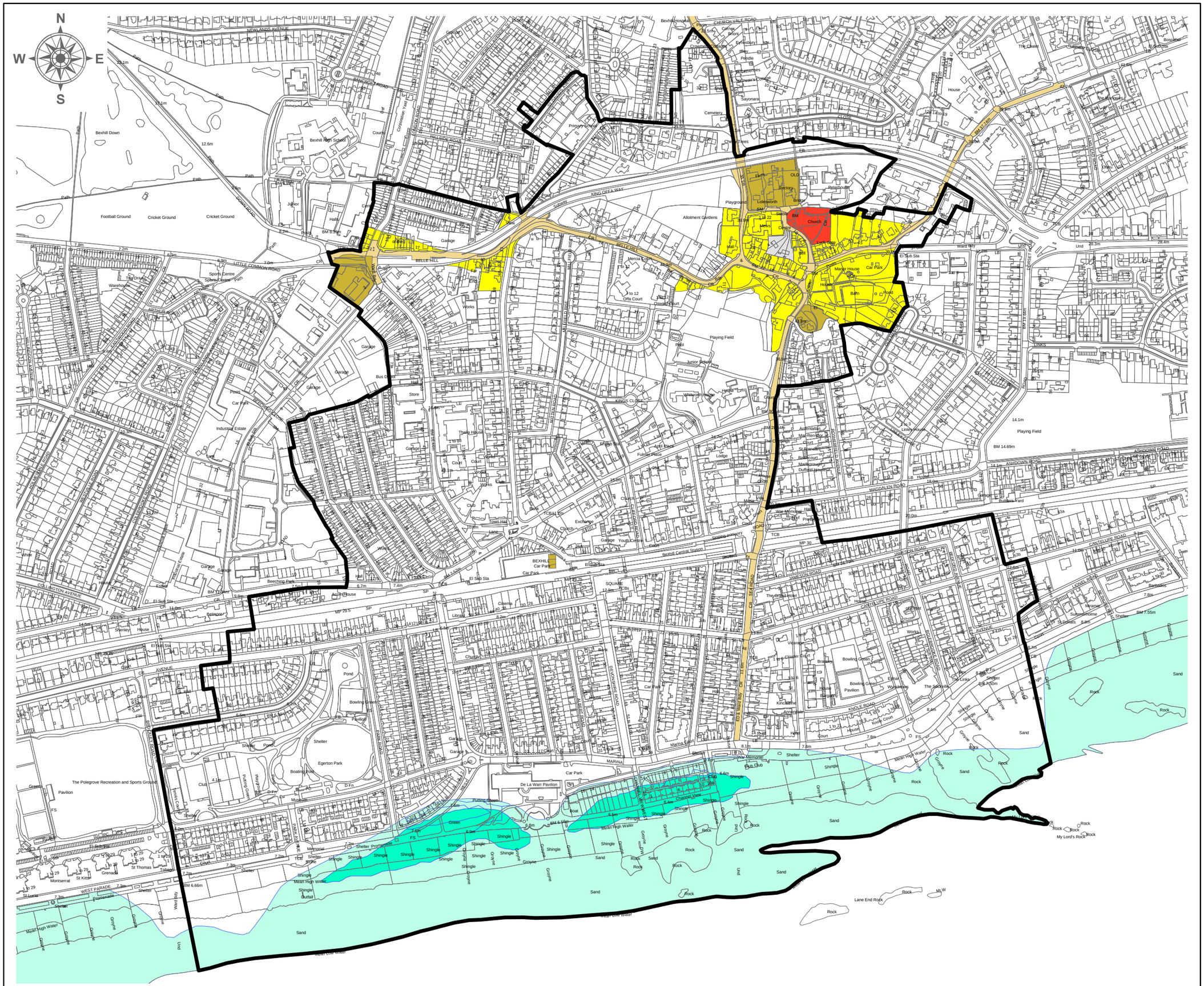
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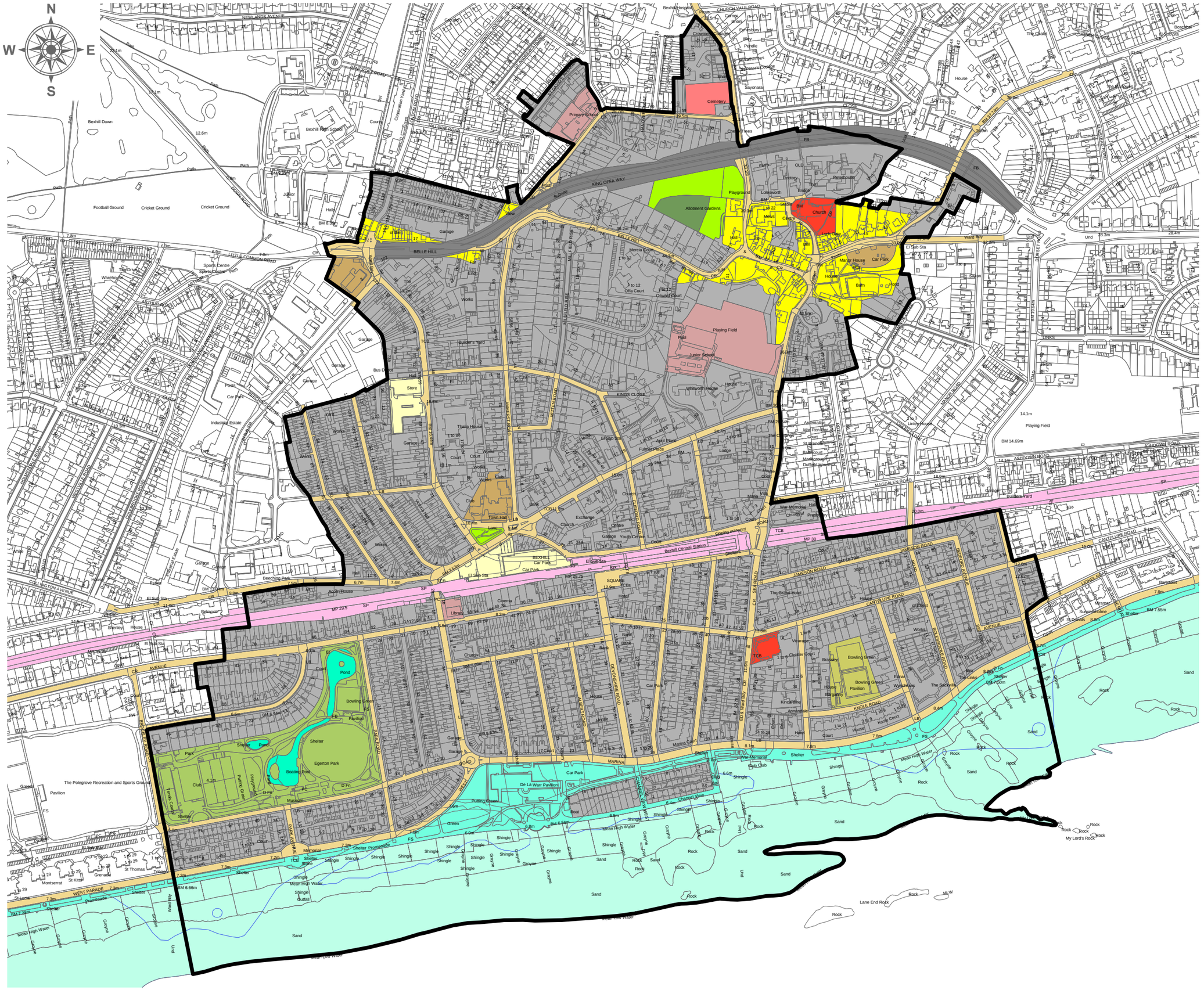
S
NEWLANDS AVENUE
Bexhill Down
Bexhill High School
Football Ground
Cricket Ground
Cricket Ground
COOMBE ROAD
KING OFFA WAY
BELLE HILL
LITTLE COMMON ROAD
Sports Centre
Warehouse
ARTHUR ROAD
Industrial Estate
Car Park
Posts
Garage
Bus Depot
Works
Stores
Hall
Garages
Beeching Park
Acacia House
Shenley
Belmour
Pond
Bowling Green
Pavilion
Shelter
Egerton Park
Boating Pool
The Polegrove Recreation and Sports Ground
Pavilion
Putting Green
Montserrat
St Kitts
Grenada
St Thomas
Tobago
St Lucia
WEST PARADE
Promenade
Mean High Water
Groyne
Outfall
Sand
Mean Low Water
Bexhill Hospital
CHURCH VALE ROAD
Cemetery
Primary School
Junior School
Playground
Allotment Gardens
Lobsworth
Farm
OLD
Rectory
Bridge
Church
Mill
Mound
Mercia Court
Otta Court
Oswald Court
Playing Field
Junior School
Whitefriars House
KINGS CLOSE
Builder's Yard
Bus Depot
Hall
Stores
Thatched House
Fuller Place
Lodge
Court
Club
Town Hall
Exchange
Library
Clarence
Bexhill Central Station
BEXHILL Car Park
El Sub Sta
SQUARE
Hotel
Bank
Church
Vicarage
Manse
Chapel
Car Park
Marina Salon
MARINA
De La Warr Pavilion
Putting Green
Shelter Promenade
Memorial
Shelter
Shingle
Groyne
Sand
Rock
Mean High Water
Mean Low Water
Outfall
Lane End Rock
My Lord's Rock
MLW
Rock
Shingle
Groyne
Sand
Mean High Water
Mean Low Water
Rock
Lane End Rock
My Lord's Rock
MLW
Rock
Rock
Rock



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BEXHILL MAP 8

Historic Character Types (2008)

KEY

EUS Bexhill HCT

- Allotments
- Beach/cliffs
- Cemetery
- Church/churchyard
- Informal parkland
- Inland water
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Major road scheme
- Park
- Public
- Retail and commercial
- School/college
- Seafront
- Sports field
- Station, sidings and track
- Suburb

EUS research and mapping:
Dr Roland B Harris FSA MIFA
October 2008

SCALE 1:6,000

0 30 60 120 180 240 Meters

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BEXHILL MAP 9

Historic Character Type areas showing principal period from which present character is derived

KEY

EUS Bexhill

PERIOD

- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15

NB The 18th-century and later date assigned to the beach simply reflects the fact that the form of the coastline is known from this period onwards only.

EUS research and mapping:
Dr Roland B Harris FSA MIFA
October 2008

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BEXHILL MAP 10

Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)

KEY

EUS Bexhill HUCA

- 1 - Old Town
- 2 - Barracks
- 3 - Railway
- 4 - London Road
- 5 - Devonshire Road
- 6 - Seafront
- 7 - Egerton Park
- 8 - Cantelupe Road
- 9 - Larkhill

EUS research and mapping:
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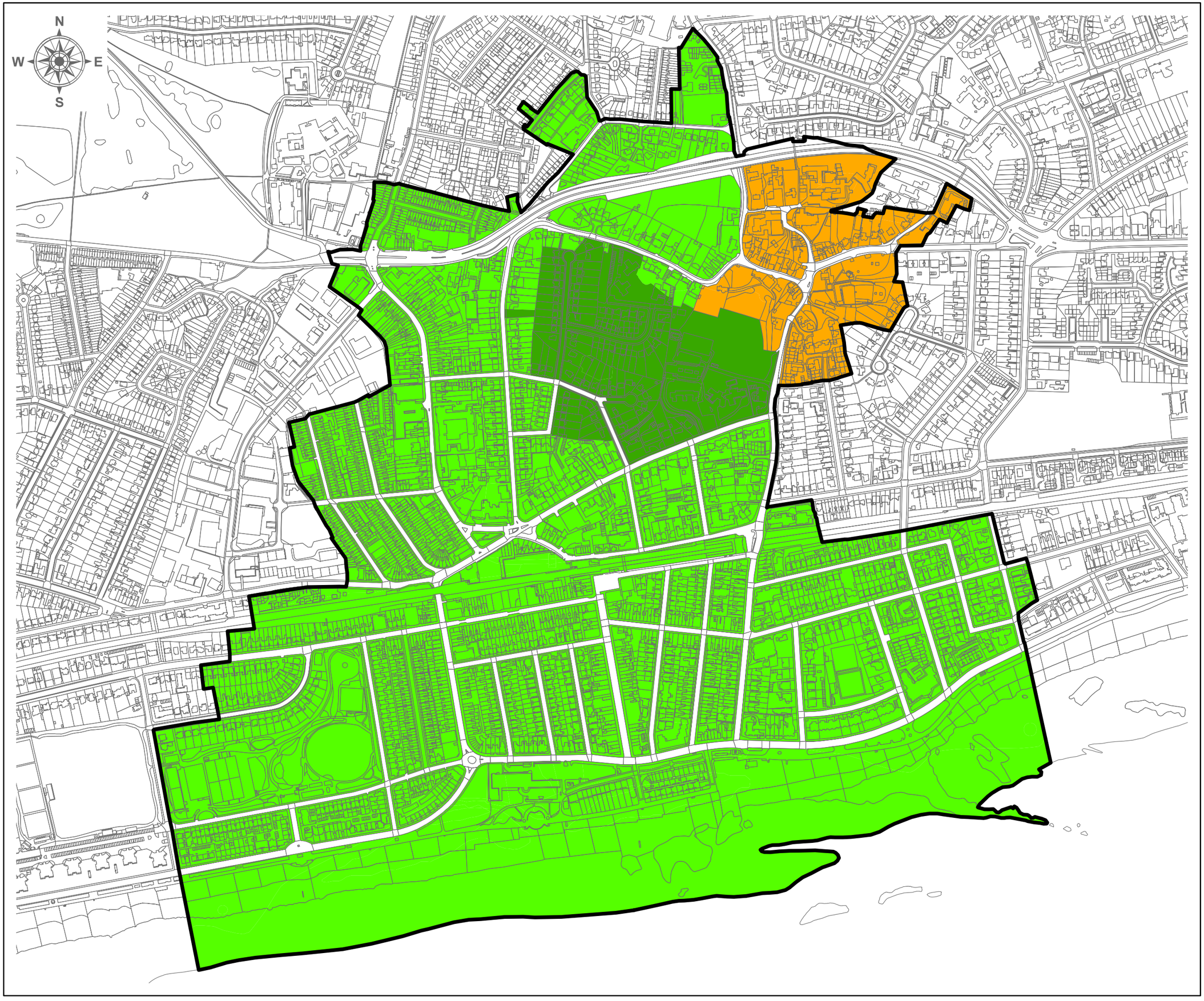

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BEXHILL MAP 11

Historic Environment Value (HEV)

KEY

EUS Bexhill HEV

- 1
- 2
- 4

EUS research and mapping:
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